

THE
DRAMATIC WORKS
OF
M. DE VOLTAIRE.

TRANSLATED
BY THE REV. MR. FRANCKLIN.

VOLUME XXII.



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DRAMA IN TWO ACTS

BY J. P. B. ALLEN

NEW YORK

THE NEW YORK THEATRE

1897

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This VOLUME contains

A LETTER from Signor ALGAROTTI to Signor FRANCHINI, Envoy at *Florence*, on the Tragedy of JULIUS CÆSAR.

THE DEATH of CÆSAR. A Tragedy.

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AMELIA; or, The DUKE of FOIX. A Tragedy.

A LETTER to her Most Serene Highness the DUCHESS of MAINE.

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THE PRODIGAL. A Comedy.

A LETTER from the Jesuit TOURNEMINE to Father BRUMOY, on the Tragedy of MEROPE.

A LETTER to the Marquis SCIPIO MAFFEI, Author of the *Italian* MEROPE, and many other celebrated Performances.

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MEROPE. A Tragedy.

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A

L E T T E R

FROM

SIGNOR ALGAROTTI,

T O

SIGNOR FRANCHINI,

ENVOY at FLORENCE.

On the TRAGEDY of JULIUS CÆSAR,
by Mr. DE VOLTAIRE.

S I R,

I HAVE defer'd sending you the Julius Cæsar, which you desir'd, till now, that I might have the pleasure of communicating to you the tragedy on that subject, as written by Mr. de Voltaire. The edition of it printed at Paris some months ago, is extremely faulty; one may easily perceive in it the hand of some of those gentlemen,
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whom Petronius calls *Doctores Umbratici*. It is even so shamefully defective, as to give us verses that have not the proper number of syllables. This piece, notwithstanding, has been as severely criticis'd, as if Mr. de Voltaire himself had publish'd it: wou'd it not be cruelly unjust to impute to Titian, the bad colouring of one of his pictures, that had been dawb'd over by a modern painter? I have been fortunate enough to procure a manuscript fit to be sent to you: you will see the picture exactly as it came out of the hand of the master: I will even venture to accompany it with the remarks which you desired of me.

Not to know that there is a French language and a French theatre, cannot shew a greater degree of ignorance, than not to know to what perfection Corneille and Racine carry'd the drama. It seem'd, indeed, as if, after these great men, nothing remain'd to be wish'd for, and that all which cou'd be done, was to endeavour to imitate them. Cou'd one expect any thing in painting after the *Galatæa* of Raphael? and yet the famous head of Michael Angelo, in the little Farnese, gave us an idea of a species more fierce and terrible, to which this art might be rais'd. In the fine arts, we do not perceive the void till after it is fill'd up. Most of the tragedies of the great masters I just now mention'd, whether the scene lies at Rome, Athens, or Constantinople, contain nothing more than a marriage concerted, or broken off: we can expect, indeed, nothing better in this species of tragedy, wherein love makes peace or war with a smile. I cannot help thinking but that the drama is capable of something infinitely superior to this. Julius Cæsar is to me a proof of it. The author of the tender *Zara* breathes nothing here but sentiments of ambition, liberty, and revenge.

Tragedy

Tragedy shou'd be an imitation of great men ; it is that which distinguishes it from comedy : but if the actions which it represents are likewise great, the distinction is still better mark'd out, and by these means we may arrive at a nobler species. Do we not admire Mark Antony more at Philippi than at Actium ? I am apprehensive, notwithstanding, that reasonings of this kind will meet with the strongest opposition. We must have very little acquaintance with human nature not to know, that prejudice generally gets the better of reason ; and above all, those prejudices that are authoris'd by a sex that imposes laws upon us, which we always submit to with pleasure.

Love has been too long in possession of the French theatre, to suffer any other passions to supplant it, which inclines me to think, that Julius Cæsar will meet with the fate of Themistocles, Alcibiades, and many other great men of Athens, that of being admir'd by all mankind : whilst Ostracism banish'd them from their own country.

In some places Mr. de Voltaire has imitated Shakespear, an English poet, who united in the same piece the most childish absurdities and the finest strokes of the true sublime. He has made the same use of him as Virgil did of Ennius, and taken from him the two last scenes, which are, doubtless, the finest models of eloquence which the stage ever produced.

Quum flueret lutulentus, erat quod tollere velles.

What is it but the remains of barbarism in Europe, to endeavour to make those bounds, which power and policy have prescribed to separate states and kingdoms, the limits also of science, and the fine arts, whose progress might be so widely extended

tended by that commerce and mutual light which they wou'd throw on each other: a reflection which may be more serviceable to the French nation than any other, as it is exactly in the case of an author, from whom the public expect more in proportion to what they have already received from him. France is so highly polish'd and cultivated, that we have a right to demand of her, not only that she shou'd approve, but that she shou'd adopt and enrich herself with every thing that is excellent amongst her neighbours:

Tros Rutulufve fuat, nullo discrimine habeto.

There is one objection to this tragedy, which I shou'd not have mentioned to you, but that I heard it made by many, that it has but three acts: this, say the critics, is against all the rules of the stage, which require that there shou'd be exactly five. It is certainly one of the first rules of the drama, that the representation shou'd not take up more time than the real action. They have therefore very rationally limited that time to three hours, because a longer wou'd weary the attention; and, at the same time, wou'd prevent our uniting in the same point of view, the different circumstances of the action. Upon this principle, we have divided the play into five acts, for the conveniency of the spectators, and of the author also, who has leisure to bring about, during these intervals, any incident necessary to the plot or catastrophe. The whole of the objection then after all is no more, than that the action of Julius Cæsar lasts but two hours instead of three: and if that is no fault, neither can the division of its acts be esteem'd as one; because the same rule which requires that an action of three hours shou'd be divided into five acts, will require also, that an action of two hours shou'd

shou'd be divided into three only. There is no reason why, because the utmost extent of the play is limited to three hours, that therefore we shou'd not make it less; nor can I see why a tragedy, where the three unities are observ'd, which is interesting, and excites terror and compassion, which in short does every thing in two hours, that others do in three, shou'd not be equally good. A statue wherein the fine proportions and other rules of the art are observ'd, is not a less fine statue, because it is of a smaller size than any other, made by the same rules. Nobody, I believe, thinks the Venus of Medicis less perfect in its kind than the Gladiator, because it is but four foot high, and the Gladiator six. Mr. de Voltaire, perhaps, gave his Cæsar less extent than is usually allow'd to dramatic performances, only to sound the opinion and taste of the public by an essay, if we may give that name to so finish'd a piece. It wou'd have made a kind of revolution in the French theatre, and had been, perhaps, too bold a venture, to talk of liberty and politics for three hours together, to a nation that had been so long accustom'd to see Mithridates sighing and whining, when he was just on the point of marching to the capitol. We are surely oblig'd to Mr. de Voltaire for his conduct, and ought by no means to condemn him for not bringing love, or women, into his play: born as they are, to inspire soft and tender sentiments, they wou'd have play'd an absurd and ridiculous part between Brutus and Cassius, *Atroces Animæ*: they make indeed so conspicuous figures elsewhere, that they have no reason to complain of being excluded from Cæsar. I shall pass over the many detach'd beauties to be met with in this piece, the strength of its numbers, and the variety of images and sentiments scatter'd throughout.

What might we not expect from the author of Brutus and the Henriade? the scene of the conspiracy is one of the finest we have ever seen on any stage: it hath call'd into action that which we never met with before but in dull narration.

* Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures
 Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus, &
 quæ
 Ipse sibi tradit spectator.

Even the death of Cæsar passes almost in sight of the spectators, and thus prevents a recital of it, which how beautiful soever, must have been comparatively cold and languid; events of this kind, together with every circumstance attending them, being already known to all the world.

I cannot sufficiently admire this tragedy, when I consider what a variety of incidents there are in it, how great the characters are, and how finely supported: what a noble contrast between Brutus and Cæsar! What makes this subject most difficult to handle, is the great art required, to describe, on the one hand, Brutus with a savage ferocious virtue, and even bordering on ingratitude, but at the same time engag'd in a righteous cause, at least to all appearances, and conformable to the times he liv'd in; and on the other hand, Cæsar, full of clemency and the most amiable virtues, heaping favours on his enemies, and yet endeavouring to destroy the liberty of his country. We are strongly interested for both of them during the whole action of the piece, though it shou'd seem as if the passions must hurt and destroy each other reciprocally in the end, like two several weights equal and oppos'd to each other, and consequently

* See Horace de Arte Poetica, v. 180.

sequently cou'd produce no effect, but that of sending the spectators back disgusted, and without any emotion. Some such reflections most probably induc'd a * brother poet to declare, that he look'd upon this subject as the rock of dramatic authors, and that he wou'd gladly propose it to any of his rivals. But Mr. de Voltaire, not content with these difficulties, seems desirous of creating more, by making Brutus the son of Cæsar; which, however, is founded on history. He has even, by these means, found an opportunity of introducing some charming scenes, and throwing into his piece a new interest, which is united to the action, and brings on the catastrophe. The harangue of Antony produces a fine effect, and is, in my opinion, a model of seducing eloquence. Upon the whole, we may with truth assert, that Mr. de Voltaire, in this tragedy, has open'd a new path, and, at the same time, trod in it with the highest success.

B 4

THE

* M. Martelli, who wrote several tragedies in Italian: he made use of a new species of rhimes, in the manner of Alexandrines, a novelty which was by no means favourable to his performances.



THE
DEATH
OF
CÆSAR.
A
TRAGEDY.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

JULIUS CÆSAR, Dictator.

MARK ANTONY, Consul.

JUNIUS BRUTUS, Prætor.

CASSIUS,

CIMBER,

DECIMUS

DOLABELLA,

CASCA,

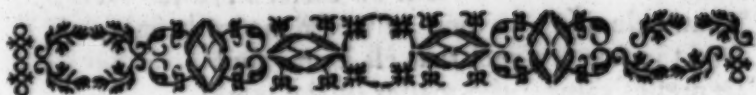
ROMANS.

LICTORS.

} Senators.

S C E N E, the Capitol at ROME.

THE



T H E
D E A T H
O F
C Æ S A R.
A
T R A G E D Y.

A C T I. S C E N E I.

C Æ S A R, A N T O N Y.

Ant. **Y** E S, Cæsar, thou shalt reign; the day is come,
Propitious to thy vows, when haughty Rome
At length shall know, and shall reward, thy virtues,
Long time unjust to thee and to herself,
Shall hail thee on the throne her great avenger,
Her conqu'ror, and her king: on Antony
Thou may'st depend, who never felt the sting
Of envy, but still held thy honour dear.
Ev'n as his own: thou know'st I form'd the chain
Which for the neck of Rome thou hast prepar'd,
Content to be the second of mankind;

Fonder

Fonder to bind the wreath on Cæsar's brows
 Than rule myself: thou answer'st me with sighs,
 And the fair prospect that elates my soul
 Depresses thine; the master of the world,
 The king of Rome complains: can Cæsar mourn?
 Can Cæsar fear? what can inspire a soul
 Like thine with terror?

- *Cæs.* Friendship, Antony:

But I must open all my heart to thee.
 'Thou know'st that I must leave thee, fate decrees
 We must transport our arms to Babylon,
 To wash out, in the savage Parthian's blood,
 The shame of Crassus, and the Roman people:
 My touring eagle to the Bosphorus
 Shall wing his way, my faithful legions wait
 But for the royal wreath around my brows,
 The wish'd-for signal: wherefore shou'd not Cæsar
 Subdue a kingdom Alexander conquer'd?
 The Rhine submitted, why shou'd not Euphrates
 To Cæsar's arms? that hope shall animate
 The bosom of thy friend, yet blinds him not;
 Fortune perhaps, grown weary of her favours,
 At length may leave me; Pompey she betray'd,
 And may quit Cæsar too; the deepest wisdom
 Is oft deceiv'd: where faction reigns, our fate
 Suspended hangs, as on the battle's edge,
 'Tis but a step from triumph to disgrace.
 Cæsar, thou know'st, these forty years hath serv'd,
 Commanded, conquer'd, seen the fate of empires
 Lodg'd in my hands, and trust me, Antony,
 In ev'ry action the decisive stroke
 Depended on a moment: but whate'er
 Chance may bring forth, my heart has nought to fear,
 Cæsar shall conquer without pride, or die
 Without complaint: but from thy tender friendship
 One precious boon I must demand of thee;
 My children, Antony, will find a friend,
 I hope, in thee: I hope that Rome, by me
 Defended, and by me subdu'd, will own
 Thy pow'r; thou shalt, with my sons, enjoy
 The name of king, and rule o'er all mankind;

Remember,

Remember, 'tis the last request I make,
That thou wilt be a father to my children;
I ask not for thy oaths, those idle fureties
Of human faith, thy promise is sufficient;
For purer is thy word than sacred altars,
Oft stain'd with human perjury and falsehood.

Ant. It was enough to leave thy Antony,
And seek for death in foreign climes without him;
To Asia's plains, when glory calls my friend,
That I must stay in Italy to plead
My Cæsar's cause, but it afflicts me more
To see thy noble heart dejected thus,
Distrusting fortune, and presaging ill
That ne'er may happen: wherefore talk'st thou thus,
Of Antony's dividing with thy sons,
Thy fortunes, and thy fame? thou hast no son
But thy Octavius, no adopted heir.

Cæs. I can no longer hide from thee, my friend,
The griefs that prey upon a father's heart;
Octavius, by the laws is made the son
Of Cæsar's choice, I have appointed him
My successor; but fate (or shall I call it
Propitious, or unkind I know not which)
Hath made me father to a real son,
One whom I love with tenderness, alas!
But ill repaid by him.

Ant. Can there be one
So base and so ungrateful, so unworthy
The noble blood from whence he sprang?

Cæs. Attend,
And mark me well: thou know'st th' unhappy Brutus,
Instructed in the school of savage virtue
By the stern Cato, he whose furious zeal
Defends our antient laws, the rigid foe
Of arbitrary pow'r, who, still in arms
Against me, gives my enemies new hope
And new support, who in Thessalia's plains
Was late my captive, whose life twice I sav'd,
Spite of himself, was born amongst my foes,
And bred up far from me.

Ant. Cou'd Brutus, cou'd—

Cæs.

Cæs. Believe not me, but read this paper.

Ant. Gods!

The fierce Servilia! Cato's haughty sister!

Cæs. The same; a private marriage made us one.
Cato, when first our public discord rose,
Indignant forc'd her to another's arms,
But her new husband, on the very day
That he espous'd her, dy'd; and Cæsar's son
Was brought up in the name of Brutus, still
Was he reserv'd, ye gods, to hate his father!
But read, this fatal scroll will tell thee all.

Ant. [*Reads the paper.*] *Cæsar, I die; the wrath of
heav'n, that cuts*

My thread of life, alone can end my love.

Farewel: remember, Brutus is thy son:

And may that tender friendship for his father,

Which at her latest hour Servilia felt,

Live in his mind, and make him worthy of thee.

Has cruel fate to Cæsar giv'n a son
So much unlike him!

Cæs. Brutus hath his virtues:

His haughty courage, tho' it angers me,
Flatters my pride; I feel a secret pleasure,
Tho' it offends me: his undaunted heart
Rises superior, and ev'n conquers mine;
I am astonish'd at him, and his firmness
So shakes my soul I know not how to blame him,
When he condemns the arbitrary pow'r
I have assum'd: his genius tow'rs above me:
As man and father, some bewitching charm
Deceives me still, and pleads his cause within;
Or, born a Roman, still my country's voice,
Spite of myself, breaks forth, and calls me tyrant:
Perhaps that liberty I mean to oppress,
Stronger than Cæsar, forces me to love him:
Nay, more: if Brutus owes to me his life,
The son of Cæsar must abhor a master;
For in my early years I thought like him,
Detested Sylla, and the name of tyrant:

Myself

Myself had been like him, a citizen,
 The partisan of liberty and Rome,
 Had not that proud usurper Pompey strove
 To crush my fame beneath his growing pow'r;
 For I was born ambitious, fierce of soul,
 Yet brave and virtuous; if I were not Cæsar,
 I wou'd be Brutus—but we all must yield
 To our condition: Brutus soon will talk
 Another language, when he knows his birth:
 Trust me, the royal wreath that's destin'd for him
 Will bend the stubborn temper of his soul:
 For manners change with fortune: nature, blood,
 My favours, thy advice, united all
 With int'rest and with duty, must restore him.

Ant. I doubt it much; I know his savage firmness;
 The sect he follows is a sect of fools,
 Perverse and obstinate, whom nothing moves,
 Intractable and bold; they make a merit
 Of hard'ning minds against humanity,
 Whilst angry nature falls subdu'd before them;
 To these he listens, and to these alone.
 The horrid tenets which these sons of pride
 Call duty, hold dominion absolute,
 And lord it o'er their adamantine hearts.
 Cato himself, that wretched stoic, he
 Who fell at Utica, that brain-sick hero,
 Who spurn'd thy proffer'd pardon, and prefer'd
 A shameful death to Cæsar's tender friendship,
 Ev'n Cato was less stern, less proud, than he;
 Less to be fear'd than this ungrateful son,
 Whom thy good heart wou'd thus endear to thee.

Cæ. What hast thou said, my friend? thy words
 alarm me.

Ant. I love thee, Cæsar, and must not deceive thee.

Cæf. Time softens all things.

Ant. I despair of it.

Cæf. What! will his hatred——

Ant. Trust me.

Cæf. Well, no matter:

I am a father still: I oft have serv'd,
 Nay sav'd, my bittr'est foes: I wou'd be lov'd

By Rome and by my son ; my clemency
 Shall conquer ev'ry heart ; the world subdu'd,
 Shall join with Brutus to adore my pow'r.
 Thou must assist me in the great design ;
 Thou, Antony, didst lend thy useful arm
 To aid me in the conquest of mankind,
 Thou too must conquer Brutus ; try to soften
 His spirit, and prepare his savage virtue
 For the important secret which my heart
 Dreads to reveal ; yet he must know it soon.

Ant. I will do all, but cannot hope success.

SCENE II.

CÆSAR, ANTONY, DOLABELLA.

Dol. Cæsar, the senators attend your pleasure,
 Wait your supreme command, and crave admittance.

Cæs. They've staid too long already ; let them enter.

Ant. They come, with hatred and sour discontent
 On ev'ry brow.

SCENE III.

CÆSAR, ANTONY, BRUTUS, CASSIUS, CIM-
 BER, DECIMUS, CINNA, CASCA, &c. Lictors.

Cæs. [*seated.*] Welcome, ye pillars of immortal Rome,
 And friends to Cæsar : Cimber, Decimus,
 Cassius, and Cinna, and thou, dearest Brutus,
 Come near : at length behold th' important hour
 When Cæsar, if the gods shall smile upon me,
 Goes to complete the conquest of the world,
 To seize the throne of Cyrus, and appease
 Our Crassus' angry shade : the time is come
 When what remains of universal empire,
 Still unsubdu'd, shall yield to Rome and me :
 Euphrates calls ; to-morrow I depart.

Brutus

Brutus and Cassius follow me to Asia;
 Antony's care is Gaul and Italy;
 Cimber must rule o'er the subjected kings
 Of Betis' borders, and th' Atlantic sea;
 Lycia and Greece I give to Decimus;
 Pontus to thee, Marcellus; and to Casca
 All Syria's wide domain. Our conquests thus
 Protected, and Rome left in happiness
 And union, nought remains but to determine
 What title Cæsar, arbiter of Rome,
 And of the world, shall wear: by your command
 Sylla was call'd Dictator; Marius, Consul;
 And Pompey, Emp'ror: I subdued the last,
 Let that suffice; new empires will demand
 New names; we must have one more great, more sacred,
 Less liable to change; one long rever'd
 In antient Rome, and dear to all mankind.
 'Tis rumour'd thro' the world, that Rome, in vain,
 Wars on the Persian; that a king alone
 Must conquer there, and only kings can rule:
 Cæsar will go, but Cæsar is no king,
 An humble citizen alone, but fam'd
 For his past service, subject to the will
 And fond caprice of an uncertain people,
 Who yet may thwart—you understand me, Romans,
 You know my hopes, my merit, and—my pow'r.

Cim. Cæsar, I'll answer thee. Those crowns, and
 sceptres,

That world you give us, to the people's eye,
 And to the senate, jealous of their rights,
 Appear an inj'ry, not a favour done,
 On such conditions: Marius, Pompey, Sylla,
 These proud usurpers of the people's pow'r,
 Never pretended thus to canton out
 Rome's conquests, or to dictate thus, like kings:
 We hoped from Cæsar's clemency a gift
 More precious, and a nobler treasure, far
 Above the kingdoms which thy bounty gave.

Cæs. What woud'st thou ask of Cæsar?

Cem. Liberty.

Cæs.



Cæs. It was thy promise; thou didst swear thyself
For ever to uproot despotic pow'r.
I thought the happy moment now was come,
When the world's conq'ror shou'd have made us happy:
Rome bath'd in blood, deserted, and enslav'd,
Found comfort in that hope: we were her children
Before we were thy slaves—I know thy pow'r,
And know that thou hast sworn.

Bru. Be Cæsar great,
But Rome still free: the mistress of the world
Abroad, shall she be manacled at home!
Rule o'er the universe, be call'd a queen,
And yet be fetter'd! What will it avail
My wretched country, and her sons, to know
That Cæsar has new slaves to trample on?
Perhaps the Persians are not our worst foes,
We may have greater. I've no more to offer.

Cæs. And thou too, Brutus!

Ant. Mark their insolence; *[Aside to Cæsar.]*
And see if they are worthy of thy favour.

Cæs. And dare ye thus, ungrateful as ye are,
Abuse my patience, and exhaust my love?
My subjects all, by right of conquest mine,
I bought you with my sword; ye spurn'd indeed
At Marius, but ye were the slaves of Pompey,
And only breathe, till Cæsar's wrath, too long
Restrain'd already, bursts with fury on you.
Ye vile Republicans, by mercy taught
But to rebel, ye durst not thus have talk'd
To Sylla; but my clemency provokes
Your base ungrateful spirit to insult me:
Cæsar, you think, will never condescend
To take revenge, this makes you talk so bravely
Of Rome and of your country, and affect
This patriot pride, this grandeur of the soul,
Before your conq'ror: to Pharsalia's plains
You shou'd have brought 'em; fortune now has plac'd us
At distance from each other: henceforth learn,
Who knows not how to conquer, must obey.

Bru. No: Cæsar we shall only learn to die.
Who begg'd his life in Thessaly? Thou gav'st

What

What was not ask'd indeed, but to debase us,
And we abhor the gift on such conditions.
Obey thee! No: pour forth thy wrath upon us;
Begin with me; strike here, if thou woud'st reign.

Cæs. Brutus attend—you may retire.

What words *[To the senators, who go out.]*

Are these? away! They pierce my very soul;
Cæsar is far from wishing for thy death:
Leave this rash senate, I entreat thee, stay,
Thou only can'st disarm me; thee alone
Cæsar wou'd wish to love: stay with me, Brutus.

Bru. But keep thy promise, and I'm thine for ever:
If thou'rt a tyrant, I detest thy love;
I will not stay with Antony or thee:
He is no Roman, for he wants a king.

SCENE IV.

CÆSAR, ANTONY.

Ant. What says my friend? Did Antony deceive him?
Think'st thou that nature e'er can move a soul
So fierce, and so inflexible? No: leave,
I beg thee, unreveal'd the fatal secret
That weighs upon thy heart: let him deplore
The fall of Rome, but never let him know
Whose blood he persecutes: he merits not
His noble birth, ungrateful to thy goodness,
Ungrateful to thy love; henceforth renounce him.

Cæs. I cannot, for I love him still.

Ant. Then cease

To love thy pow'r, renounce the diadem,
Descend from the high rank which thou hast borne;
Mercy ill suits with thy authority:
It checks thy growing pow'r, and mars thy purpose.
What! Rome beneath thy laws, and suffer Cassius
To thwart thee thus; and Cimber too, and Cinna;
Shall senators like these, obscure and low,
Talk thus before the sov'reign of mankind?
The vanquish'd wretches breathe, and brave their master.

Cæs.

Cæs. My equals born, they yielded to my arms;
Too much above to fear them: I forgive
Their trembling at the yoke which they must bear.

Ant. Marius had been less sparing of their blood,
And Sylla wou'd have punish'd them.

Cæs. That Sylla
Was a Barbarian, born but to oppress:
Murther and rage were all his policy,
And all his grandeur: amidst sighs and groans,
And punishments and death, he govern'd Rome:
He was its terror, I wou'd be its joy,
And its delight: I know the people well;
A day will change 'em; lavish of their love
And of their hatred; both are gain'd with ease:
My grandeur galls 'em, but my clemency
Attracts 'em still: 'tis policy to pardon
The foe that cannot hurt us, and an air
Of liberty will reconcile their minds,
And make the chains sit easy: I must cover
The pit with flow'rs, if I wou'd draw 'em to it,
And sooth the tiger e'er I bind him fast.
Yes, I will please them, ev'n whilst I oppress,
Charm, and enslave them, and revenge myself
On ev'ry foe by forcing him to love me.

Ant. You must be fear'd, or you will never reign.

Cæs. In battle only Cæsar wou'd be fear'd.

Ant. The people will abuse thy easy nature.

Cæs. I tell thee, no; the people worship me.
Behold that temple there, which Rome has rais'd
To Cæsar's clemency.

Ant. They'll raise another
Perhaps to vengeance: thou hast cause to dread
Their ranc'rous hearts, still cherish'd by despair,
Cruel by duty, and the slaves of Rome.
Cassius alarm'd foresees that Antony
This day shall place the crown on Cæsar's head,
And ev'n before thy face they murmur'd at it.
'Twere best to gain the most impetuous of them,
And win 'em to our int'rest: to prevent
All danger, Cæsar must constrain himself.

Cæs.

Cæs. Cou'd I have fear'd, I wou'd have punish'd them;
 Advise me not to make myself detested;
 Cæsar has learn'd to fight, has learn'd to conquer,
 But knows not how to punish: let us hence,
 And, strangers to suspicion and revenge,
 Rule without violence o'er the conquer'd world.



ACT II. SCENE I.

BRUTUS, ANTONY, DOLABELLA.

Ant. **T**HIS bitterness of hate, this proud refusal,
 Breathes less of virtue than of savage fierceness:
 Cæsar's indulgence, his high rank and pow'r
 At least deserv'd a milder treatment from you,
 And more complacency; you might at least
 Have talk'd with him: did you know with whom
 You are at variance, you wou'd shudder at it—

Bru. I shudder now; but 'tis at hearing thee;
 Foe to thy country, which thou hast betray'd
 And sold to Cæsar, think'st thou to deceive
 Or to corrupt me? go, and cringe to him,
 Fawn on your haughty lord, I know your arts,
 You long to be a slave; you want a king,
 Yet you're a Romans.

Ant. Brutus, I'm a friend,
 And boast a heart that loves humanity:
 I am contented with this humble virtue:
 But thou wou'd'st be a hero, yet art nought
 But a barbarian; and thy savage pride
 Grew fond of virtue, but to make us loath her.

SCENE II.

BRUTUS alone.

What baseness, heav'n! what ignominious slaves!
 Behold, my wretched country, your support,

Horatius,

Horatius, Decius, and thou great avenger
 Of sacred laws, Brutus, my kindred blood,
 Behold your successors ; just gods, are these
 The noble reliques of our Roman grandeur ?
 We kiss the hand that binds us to the yoke ;
 Cæsar has ravish'd ev'n our virtues from us :
 I look for Rome, but find it now no more.
 O ye immortal heroes, ye who fell
 In her defence, whose images now strike
 My soul with awe, and fill my eyes with tears,
 The family of Pompey, and thou Cato,
 Thou last of Scipio's glorious race, I feel
 A lively spark of your immortal virtues
 Rebound from you, and animate my heart :
 You live in Brutus still, and in his breast
 Have left the honour of the Roman name
 The tyrant wou'd have stol'n. What do I see,
 Great Pompey, at thy statue's foot ? a paper.

[He takes the paper and reads.]

" Brutus, *thou sleep'st, and Rome's in chains.*"
 O Rome,
 My eyes are ever open still for thee ;
 Reproach me not for chains which I abhor.
 Another paper ! *No : thou art not Brutus :*
 Cruel reflection ! Tyrant Cæsar, tremble,
 'This stroke must end thee : *no : thou art not Brutus !*
 I am, I will be Brutus ; I will perish,
 Or set my country free : Rome still, I see,
 Has virtuous hearts : she calls for an avenger,
 And has her eyes on Brutus ; she awakens
 My sleeping soul, and shakes my tardy hand :
 She calls for blood, and shall be satisfy'd.

SCENE III.

BRUTUS, CASSIUS, CINNA, CASCA, DECIMUS,
 Attendants.

Cas. 'Tis the last time we may embrace, my friends,
 Bury'd beneath the ruins of his country,

Cassius

Cassius must fall ; Cæsar can ne'er forgive me ;
 He knows our hearts, he knows our resolution ;
 Our souls, untainted by corruption, thwart
 His purposes ; in us he will destroy
 The last of Romans : yes, my friends, 'tis past ;
 Our laws, our country, and our honour's lost ;
 Rome is no more ; he triumphs over her,
 And o'er mankind ; our thoughtless ancestors
 But fought for Cæsar, but for Cæsar conquer'd :
 The spoils of kings, the sceptre of the world,
 Six hundred years of virtues, toils, and war,
 Were spent for Cæsar ; he enjoys the fruit
 Of all our dear-bought vict'ries : O, my Brutus,
 Wert thou too born to crouch beneath a master ?
 Our liberty is gone.

Bru. It will revive.

Cas. What say'st thou ? hark ! did you not hear a shout ?

Bru. 'Twas the vile rabble : think not of them, Cassius.

Cas. Did'st thou say liberty—that noise again !

S C E N E IV.

BRUTUS, CASSIUS, DECIMUS, CIMBER.

Cas. Ah ! Cimber, is it thou ? speak, what hath
 happen'd ?

Dec. Some new attempt on liberty and Rome,
 What hast thou seen ?

Cim. Our shame. When haughty Cæsar
 Came to the temple, he look'd down upon us
 Ev'n like the thund'rer, Capitolian Jove ;
 Then proudly told us of his bold design
 Of adding Persia to the Roman empire :
 'The people kneel'd before their idol, call'd him
 Rome's great avenger, conqu'ror of the world ;
 But Cæsar wanted yet another title
 To gratify his insolent ambition ;
 When, lo ! amidst this scene of adulation,
 Came Antony, and bustled thro' the croud
 That stood 'twixt him and Cæsar ; in his hand

A crown

A crown and sceptre: when, O shameful act,
 Disgraceful to a Roman! whilst we stood
 In silent admiration, unabash'd,
 He plac'd the crown on Cæsar's head; then kneel'd,
 And cry'd out, Cæsar live and reign o'er us,
 And o'er the world: our Romans, as he spake,
 Turn'd pale, and with their cries tumultuous wrung
 The temple's vaulted roof: some fled with terror,
 Whilst others blushing stood, and wept their fate.
 Cæsar, who read resentment in their looks,
 And indignation but too visible,
 With well-dissembled modesty, took off
 The radiant crown, and roll'd it at his feet.
 Instant the scene was chang'd, and ev'ry Roman
 Welcom'd with smiles returning liberty,
 Ill-founded hopes, and momentary joy!
 Antony seem'd astonish'd: Cæsar still
 Blush'd and dissembled; and the more he strove
 To hide his grief, the more was he applauded.
 By moderation he wou'd veil his crimes,
 Affects to scorn the crown, and spurn it from him:
 But, spite of all his efforts to conceal it,
 Was gall'd within to hear the people praise him
 For virtues which he never will possess.
 No longer able to conceal his rage
 And disappointment, with contracted brow
 He left the capitol, and in an hour
 The senate must attend him: an hour hence
 Shall Cæsar, change the state of Rome: thou know'st,
 O Brutus! half our senate is corrupted,
 Have bought their country, and will sell it now
 To Cæsar: they are far more infamous
 Ev'n than the people, who at least abhor
 The name of king: Cæsar, already vested
 With regal pow'r, yet wishes for the crown;
 The people have refus'd him, but the senate
 Bestow it on him: what remains?

Cæs. To die;

To end a life of mis'ry and reproach:
 I've dragg'd it on whilst yet a ray of hope
 Dawn'd on my country, but her latest hour

Is come, and Cassius never shall survive her.
 Let others weep for Rome, I can't avenge
 My country's cause, but I can perish with her.
 I go where all our gods—O Scipio, Pompey,
 'Tis time to follow you, and imitate
 Great Cato.

Bru. No: we'll not be followers,
 But bright examples: the world's eye, my friends,
 Is fix'd on us; be it our part to answer
 The great expectance of our bleeding country.
 Had Cato ta'en my counsel, he had fall'n
 More nobly, and the tyrant's blood had flow'd
 Mix'd with his own: he turn'd his blameless hand
 Against himself; but little did his death
 Avail mankind: Cato did all for glory,
 And nothing for his country: there, my friends,
 There only err'd the greatest of mankind.

Cas. What can we do in this disastrous crisis?

Bru. See what was wrote to me, and learn our duty.

[Shews the paper.]

Cas. The same reproach was sent to me.

Bru. It shews

We had deserv'd it.

Cim. Quick, the fatal hour
 Approaches, when a tyrant shall destroy
 The Roman name: one hour, and all is gone.

Bru. One hour, and Cæsar—dies.

Cas. Ha! now thou art
 What Brutus shou'd be.

Dec. —Worthy of thy race,
 The scourge of tyrants; thou hast spoke the thoughts
 Of my own heart.

Cas. O Brutus, thou reviv'st me;
 'Twas what my sorrows, what my rage expected
 From thy exalted virtue; Rome inspires
 The great design; thy voice alone decrees
 The death of tyrants: O my dearest Brutus,
 Let us blot out this infamous reproach
 On all mankind, and whilst Jove's thunder sleeps,
 Revenge the capitol. What say ye, Romans,

Have ye the same unconquerable heart,
The same desires ?

Cim. Cassius, we think with you,
Despise the thought of life, abhor the tyrant ;
We love our country, and we will avenge her :
If there's a spark of Roman virtue left,
Brutus and Cassius will revive it.

Dec. Born

The guardians of the state, the great avengers
Of ev'ry crime, too long th' oppressive hand
Of pow'r hath gall'd us, and as 'twere added guilt
To spare the tyrant, or suspend the blow :
Say, whom shall we admit to share this honour ?

Bru. We are ourselves enow to save our country.
Emilius, Dolabella, Lepidus
And Bibulus, are all the slaves of Cæsar.
Cic'ro may serve us with his eloquence,
And that alone ; he can harangue the senate,
But is too timid in the hour of danger :
He'll talk for Rome, but is not fit t' avenge her :
We'll leave the orator, who charms his country,
The task of praising us when we have sav'd it.
With you alone, my friends, will I partake
This glorious danger, this immortal honour :
The senate are to meet him an hour hence,
There I'll surprise, destroy him there : this sword,
Deep in his bosom bury'd, shall revenge
Cato, and Pompey, and the Roman people :
I know th' attempt is perilous and bold :
His watchful guards are plac'd on ev'ry side :
The changeful people, flutt'ring and inconstant,
Are doubtful whether they shou'd love or hate him.
Death seems, my friends, to be our certain fate :
But O ! how glorious such a death will be !
How much to be desir'd ! how noble is it
To fall in such a cause, to see our blood
Flow with the blood of tyrants ; with what pleasure
Shall we behold this last illustrious hour !
Yes, let us die, my friends, but die with Cæsar ;
And may that liberty his crimes oppress
Rise from his ashes, and for ever flourish !

Cas.

Cæs. Debate not then, but to the capitol
Let us away ; there he has injur'd us,
And there 'tis fit he shou'd be sacrific'd :
Fear not the people, tho' they're doubtful now,
Whene'er the idol falls, they will detest him.

Bru. Swear then with me upon this sword ; all swear
By Cato's blood, by Pompey's, by the shades
Of those brave Romans who in Afric's plains
Fell glorious ; swear by all th' avenging gods
Of Rome, that Cæsar by your hands shall die.

Cæs. Let us do more, my friends ; here let us swear
To root out all, who, like himself, shall strive
To govern here : sons, brothers, fathers, all,
If they are tyrants, Brutus, are our foes :
A true republican has neither son,
Father, nor brother, but the common-weal,
His gods, the laws, his virtue, and his country.

Bru. For ever let me join my blood with yours ;
All link'd together in one sacred knot,
Th' adopted sons of Liberty and Rome,
We'll seal our union with the tyrant's blood.

[Advancing towards the statue of Pompey.]

By you, illustrious hero, who excite
Our duty, and inspire the great design,
O Pompey, at thy sacred knees, we swear,
Nought for ourselves we do, but all for Rome,
We swear to be united for our country ;
We swear to live, to fight, and die together.
Let us be gone : away ; we've staid too long.

S C E N E V.

CÆSAR, BRUTUS.

Cæs. Stop, Brutus, I must talk with thee ; attend :
Where woud'st thou fly ?

Bru. From tyranny, and thee.

Cæs. Lictors, detain him.

Bru. Thou woud'st have my life,
Take it.

Cæs. No : Brutus, had I wanted that,
 Thou know'st, I could command it with a word,
 And thou hast merited no better fate :
 It is the pride of thy ungrateful heart
 Still to offend me ; and I find thee here
 Amongst those Romans whose dark perfidy
 I most suspect, with those who proudly dar'd
 To blame my conduct, and defy my pow'r.

Bru. They talk'd like Romans, gave thee noble
 counsel ;
 Had'st thou been wise, thou wou'd'st have follow'd it.

Cæs. Yet I'll be calm, and bear thy insolence,
 Will stoop beneath myself, and talk to thee.
 What lay'st thou to my charge ?

Bru. A ravag'd world,
 The blood of nations, and thy plunder'd country ;
 Thy pow'r, thy specious virtues that gild o'er
 Thy crimes, thy fatal clemency, that makes
 Thy chains so easy, a destructive charm
 To sooth thy captives, and deceive mankind.

Cæs. Reproach like this had suited Pompey well ;
 He whose dissembled virtues have betray'd thee,
 That haughty citizen, more fatal far,
 Wou'd not admit ev'n Cæsar as his equal.
 Think'st thou, if he had conquer'd, his proud soul
 Had left secure the liberty of Rome ?
 He wou'd have rul'd you with a rod of iron,
 What then had Brutus done ?

Bru. He wou'd have slain him.

Cæs. Is that the fate which Cæsar must expect
 From thee ? Thou answer'st not. O Brutus, Brutus,
 Thou liv'st but for my ruin.

Bru. If thou think'st so,
 Prevent my fury : what witholds thee ?

Cæs. Nature, [*Giving him the letter from Servilia.*
 And my own heart : read there, ungrateful, read
 And know whose blood thou hast oppos'd to mine ;
 See whom thou hat'st, and if thou dar'st, go on.

Bru. What have I read ? where am I ? do my eyes
 Deceive me ? [*Reading.*

Cæs. Now my son, my Brutus.

Bru.

Bru. Cæsar

My father, gracious gods!

Cæs. Ungrateful, yes

I am thy father: whence this deadly silence?

Why sobb'st thou thus, my son? Why do I hold thee

Thus in my arms mute and insensible?

Nature alarms, but cannot soften thee.

Bru. O dreadful fate! it drives me to despair:

My oaths! My country! Rome for ever dear!

Cæsar—alas! I've liv'd too long:

Cæs. O speak,

I see thy heart is lab'ring with remorse

And anguish: O hide nothing from me: still

Thou'rt silent: does the sacred name of son

Offend thee, Brutus? art thou fearful of it?

Fear'st thou to love me, to partake my fortunes?

Is Cæsar's blood so hateful to thee! Oh

This sceptre of the world, this pow'r supreme,

For thee alone, that Cæsar, whom thou hat'st,

Desir'd them: with Octavius and thyself

I wish'd but to divide the rich reward

Of all my labours, and the name of king.

Bru. O gods!

Cæs. Thou can'st not speak: these transports, Brutus,

Spring they from hatred, or from tenderness?

What secret weight hangs heavy on thy soul?

Bru. Cæsar—

Cæs. Well, what?

Bru. I cannot speak to him.

Cæs. Thou seem'st as if thou durst not call me father.

Bru. O, if thou art my father, grant me this,
This only boon.

Cæs. Ask it: to give it thee

Will make me happy.

Bru. Kill me then this moment,

Or wish no more to be a king.

Cæs. Away,

Barbarian, hence! unworthy of my love,

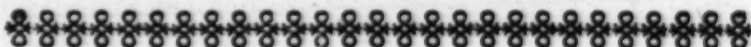
Unworthy of thy race, thou art no more

My son: go, henceforth I disclaim thee;

My heart shall take example from thy own,

And stifle nature's voice ; shall learn of thee
 To be inhuman : hence, I know thee not.
 Think not I mean again to supplicate,
 No, thou shalt see I've pow'r to crush you all :
 I will no longer listen to the pleas
 Of mercy, but obey the laws of justice ;
 My easy heart is weary of forgiveness :
 I'll act like Sylla now, like him be cruel,
 And make you tremble at my vengeance : go,
 Find out your vile seditious friends, they all
 Insulted me, and all shall suffer for it :
 They know what Cæsar can do, and shall find
 What Cæsar dare : if I am barbarous,
 Remember, thou alone hast made me so.

Bru. I must not leave him to his cruel purpose,
 But save, if possible, my friends, and Cæsar.



A C T III. S C E N E I.

CASSIUS, CIMBER, DECIMUS, CINNA, CASCA,
 with the rest of the Conspirators.

Cas. At length the hour is come when Rome again
 Shall breathe, again shall flourish ; unoppress'd
 By tyrants, soon the mistress of the world
 To freedom and to fame shall be restor'd.
 Yours is the honour, Decimus, and Casca,
 Cimber, and Probus, but one hour and Cæsar
 Shall be no more : what Cato, Pompey, all
 The pow'r of Asia, never cou'd perform,
 We, my brave friends, alone shall execute ;
 We will avenge our country : on this day
 Thus may we speak to all mankind : *Henceforth*
Respect the state of Rome ; for she is free.

Cim. Behold thy friends all ready to obey thee ;
 To live or die with thee ; to serve the senate ;
 To take the tyrant's life, or lose their own.

Dec.

Dec. But where is Brutus, Cæsar's deadliest foe,
He who assembled, he who made us swear,
Who first shall plunge the dagger in his breast,
Why comes he not? the son-in-law of Cato
Shou'd not have tarry'd thus; he may be stopp'd;
Cæsar perhaps may know—but see he comes;
Gods! what dejection in his aspect!

S C E N E II.

BRUTUS, the rest of the Conspirators.

Cas. Brutus,
What sinks thee thus? What new misfortune? Say,
Doth Cæsar know it all? Is Rome betray'd?

Bru. He knows not our design upon his life,
But trusts to you.

Dec. What then hath troubled thee?

Bru. A dreadful secret, that will make you tremble.

Cas. Cæsar's approaching death! perhaps our own!
Brutus, we all can die, but shall not tremble.

Bru. I will unveil it, and astonish thee.
Cæsar thou know'st is Brutus' foe; I've sworn
To kill him, fix'd the time, the place, the moment
Of his destruction: 'tis but what I owe
To Rome, to you, and your posterity,
Nay, to the happiness of all mankind,
And the first blow must come from Brutus' hand:
All is prepar'd: and now let me inform thee,
That Brutus is—his son.

Cim. The son of Cæsar!

Cas. His son!

Dec. O Rome!

Bru. Yes: Cæsar and Servilia,
Marry'd in private, Brutus was the fruit
Of their unhappy nuptials.

Cim. Art thou then
A tyrant's son?

Cas. It cannot, must not be:
Thou art too much a Roman.

Bru. 'Tis too true ;

Ye see, my friends, the horror of my fate :
But I am yours, for sacred is my word :
Which of you all hath strength of mind sufficient,
With more than stoic courage, far above
The common race of men, to tell me how
Brutus shou'd act ? I yeild me to your sentence :
All silent ! All with down cast eyes ! Thou, Cassius,
Wilt not thou speak ? No friendly hand stretch'd out
To save me from this horrid precipice !

Bru. Cassius, thou tremblest ; thy astonish'd soul—

Cas. I tremble at the counsel I must give.

Bru. Yet speak.

Cas. Were Brutus one amongst the croud
Of vulgar citizens, I shou'd have said,
Go, be a brother tyrant, serve thy father,
Destroy that country which thou shoud'st support,
Rome shall hereafter be reveng'd on both :
But I am talking to the noble Brutus,
The scourge of tyrants, whose unconquer'd heart
Hath not a drop of Cæsar's blood within it :
Thou knew'st the traitor Catiline, whose rage
Was well nigh fatal to us all.

Bru. I did.

Cas. If, on the day when that abhorred monster
Levell'd the blow at liberty and Rome,
If, when the senate had condemn'd the traitor,
He had acknowledg'd Brutus for his son,
How woud'st thou then have acted ?

Bru. Can'st thou ask me ?

Think'st thou, my heart, thus in a moment chang'd,
Cou'd balance 'twixt a traitor and my country !

Cas. Brutus, that word alone points out thy duty :
It is the senate's will, and Rome's in safety.
But say, hast thou indeed those secret checks
Which vulgar minds mistake for nature's voice,
And shall a word from Cæsar thus extinguish
Thy love for Rome, thy duty, and thy faith ?
Or true or false the secret that he told thee,
Is he less guilty, art thou less a Roman,
Art thou not Brutus, tho' the son of Cæsar ?

Is not thy hand, thy heart, thy honour pledg'd
 To us and to thy country? If thou art
 The tyrant's son, Rome is thy mother still,
 We are thy brothers. Born as Brutus was
 Within these sacred walls, th' adopted son
 Of Cato, bred by Scipio and by Pompey,
 The friend of Cassius, what woud'st thou desire?
 These are thy noblest titles, and another
 Wou'd but disgrace them: what if Cæsar, smit
 With lawless passion for the fair Servilia,
 Seduc'd her to his arms, and gave thee birth,
 Bury thy mother's follies in oblivion:
 'Twas Cato form'd thy noble soul to virtue,
 And Cato is thy father; therefore loose
 The shameful tie that binds thee to another:
 Firm to thy oaths and to thy cause remain,
 And own no parents but the world's avengers.

Bru. My noble friends, to you I next appeal.

Cim. By Cassius judge of us, by us of Cassius:
 Cou'd we think otherwise, of all Rome's sons
 We were most guilty: but why ask of us
 What thy own breast can best inform thee? Brutus
 Alone can tell what Brutus ought to do.

Bru. Now then, my friends, I'll lay my heart before:
 With all its horrors; O'tis deeply wounded, [you,
 And tears have flow'd ev'n from a stoic's eye:
 After the dreadful oath which I have made,
 To serve my country, and to kill my father,
 I weep to see myself the son of Cæsar,
 Admire his virtues, and condemn his crimes,
 Lament the hero, and abhor the tyrant,
 Pity and horror rend my troubled soul;
 I wish that fate you have prepar'd for him
 Wou'd fall on Brutus: but I'll tell you more,
 Know, I esteem him, and 'midst all his crimes,
 His nobleness of heart has won me to him:
 If Rome cou'd e'er submit to regal pow'r,
 He is the only tyrant we shou'd spare.
 Be not alarm'd; that name alone secures me,
 Rome and the senate have my faith, the welfare
 Of all mankind declares against a king.

Yes, I embrace the virtuous task with horror,
 And tremble at it, but I will be faithful :
 I go to talk with Cæsar, and perhaps
 To change and soften him, perhaps to save
 Rome and himself : O may the gods bestow
 Persuasive utt'rance on my lips, and pow'r
 To move his soul ; but if in vain I plead
 The cause of liberty, if Cæsar still
 Is deaf to my intreaties, strike, destroy him,
 I'll not betray my country for my father ;
 The world, astonish'd, may approve or blame
 My cruel firmness, and this deed hereafter
 Be call'd a deed or horror, or of glory ;
 My soul is not ambitious of applause,
 Or fearful of reproach ; a Roman still,
 And independent, to the voice of duty,
 And that alone, I listen ; for the rest,
 'Tis equal all ; away ; be slaves no longer.

Cæs. The welfare of the state depends on thee,
 And on thy sacred word we shall rely,
 As if great Cato and the gods of Rome
 Had promis'd to defend us.

S C E N E III.

BRUTUS alone.

Cæsar comes

Ev'n now to meet me, 'tis th' appointed hour,
 And this the place, ev'n in the capitol,
 Where he must die : let me not hate him, gods !
 O stop this arm uplifted to destroy him,
 Inspire his noble heart with love of Rome,
 And, if he is my father, make him just !
 He comes : I have not pow'r to speak, or move,
 Great spirit of Cato, now support my virtue !

SCENE

SCENE IV.

CÆSAR, BRUTUS.

Cæs. Brutus, we're met : what woud'st thou ? hast thou yet

A human heart ? art thou the son of Cæsar.

Bru. I am, if Cæsar be the son of Rome.

Cæs. Was it for this, thou proud republican,
We met together ? com'st thou to insult me ?
Not all my bounties show'r'd upon thy head,
Glory and empire, and a subject world,
Waiting to pay thee homage, nought can move
Thy stubborn heart : what think'st thou of a crown ?

Bru. I think of it with horror.

Cæs. Prejudice

And passion blind thee, I excuse thy weakness ;
But can'st thou hate me ?

Bru. No : I love thee, Cæsar ;
Thy noble deeds long since inclin'd my heart
To rev'rence thee ; before thou had'st disclos'd
The secret of my birth, I wept to see thee
At once the glory and the scourge of Rome :
Wou'd Cæsar be a Roman citizen,
I shou'd adore him, and wou'd sacrifice
My life and fortune to defend his cause ;
But Cæsar, as a king, I must abhor.

Cæs. What do'st thou hate me for ?

Bru. Thy tyranny.

O listen to the counsel, to the pray'rs,
The tears of Rome, the senate, and thy son ;
Wou'dst thou desire to be the first of men ?
Wou'dst thou enjoy a right, superior far
To all that war and conquest can bestow ?
Wou'd'st thou be more than king, nay more than Cæsar—

Cæs. What's to be done ?

Bru. Thou see'st the world enslav'd,
Bound to thy chariot, break their chains in sunder,
Renounce the diadem, and be a Roman.

Cæs.

Cæs. What hast thou bade me do?

Bru. What Sylla did

Before thee; he had waded in our blood,
He made Rome free, and all was soon forgotten;
Deep as his hands were dipp'd in deadly slaughter,
He left the throne, and wash'd his crimes away.
Thou hast not Sylla's cruelty and rage,
Adopt his virtues then; thy heart, we know,
Can pardon, therefore can thy heart do more;
'Tis Rome thou must forgive: then shalt thou reign
As Cæsar shou'd, then Brutus is thy son:
Still do I plead in vain?

Cæs. Rome wants a master,

As one day thou perhaps may'st plainly prove.
Brutus, our laws shou'd with our manners change;
That liberty thou doat'st on is no more
Than the fool's right to hurt himself, and Rome,
That spread destruction round the world, now seems
To work her own; the great Colossus falls,
And in her ruin buries half mankind:
To me she stretches forth her feeble arm
To aid her in her perils. Since the days
Of Sylla, all our virtue's lost; the laws,
Rome, and the state, are nought but empty names.
Alas! thou talk'st in these corrupted times
As if the Decii, and Æmilii liv'd;
Cato deceiv'd thee, and thy fatal virtue
Will but destroy thy country, and thyself;
Submit thy reason to the conqueror
Of Cato and of Pompey, to a father
Who loves thee, Brutus, who laments thy errors;
Give me thy heart, and be indeed my son:
Take other steps, and force not nature thus
Against thyself: not answer me, my Brutus,
But turn thy eyes away!

Bru. I'm not my self:

Strike me, ye gods! O Cæsar——

Cæs. Thou art mov'd,

I see thou art, my son; thy soften'd soul——

Bru. Thy life's in danger; know'st thou that, my
father?

Know'st

Know'st thou, there's not a Roman then but wishes
 In secret to destroy thee? let thy own,
 Thy country's safety, plead my cause: by me
 Thy genius speaks, it throws me at thy feet,
 And presses for thy welfare; in the name
 Of all those gods thou hast so late forgotten,
 Of all thy virtues, in the name of Rome;
 Shall I yet add the tender name of son,
 A son who trembles for thee, who prefers
 To Cæsar Rome alone, O hear, and save me!

Cæs. Leave me, my Brutus, leave me.

Bru. Be persuaded.

Cæs. The world may change, but Cæsar never will.

Bru. This is thy answer then?

Cæs. I am resolv'd;

Rome must obey, when Cæsar hath determin'd.

Bru. Then fare thee well.

Cæs. Ha! wherefore? Stay, my son,
 Thou weep'st, can Brutus weep? Is it because
 Thou hast a king? dost thou lament for Rome?

Bru. I weep for thee, and thee alone; farewell!

[Exit Brutus.]

Cæs. Heroic virtue! How I envy Brutus!
 Wou'd I cou'd love like him the commonweal!

SCENE V.

CÆSAR, DOLABELLA, ROMANS.

Dol. Cæsar, the senate, at the temple met
 By thy command, await thee, and the throne
 Already is prepar'd, the people throng
 Around thy statues, and the senate fix
 Their wav'ring minds; but, if I might be heard,
 If Cæsar wou'd give ear to one who loves him,
 A fellow-soldier and a friend, to augurs,
 To dreadful omens, to the gods themselves,
 He wou'd defer the great event.

Cæs. Away:

Defer such glorious business! lose a crown,
 What pow'r shall stop me?

Dol.

Dol. Nature doth conspire
With heav'n to blast thy purpose, and foretel
Thy death.

Cæs. No matter, Cæsar's but a man ;
Nor do I think that heav'n wou'd e'er disturb
The course of nature, or the elements
Rise in confusion, to prolong the life
Of one poor mortal ; by th' immortal gods
Our days are number'd ; we must yield to fate ;
Cæsar has nought to fear.

Dol. Cæsar has foes,
And this new yoke may gall them ; what if these
Conspire against thee !

Cæs. O, they dare not do it.

Dol. Thy heart's too confident.

Cæs. Such poor precautions
Wou'd make me look contemptible, perhaps
Wou'd do me little service.

Dol. For Rome's safety
Cæsar shou'd live : at least permit thy friend
T'attend thee to the senate.

Cæs. No : why alter
Our first resolve ? why hasten the decrees
Of fate ? who changes only shews his weakness.

Dol. I quit thee with regret, and own I fear.
Alas ! my heart beats heavily.

Cæs. Away.
Better to die than be afraid of death :
Farewel.

SCENE VI.

DOLABELLA, ROMANS.

Dol. What hero better cou'd deserve
The homage of mankind ? O join with me,
Ye Romans, to admire and honour Cæsar ;
Live to obey, and die to serve him—heav'n !
What noise is that, what dreadful clamours !

The

The CONSPIRATORS behind the scenes.

Die,

Die, tyrant : courage, Cassius.

Dol. Fly, and save him.

S C E N E VII.

CASSIUS, a dagger in his hand, DOLABELLA,
ROMANS.

Cas. The deed is done : he's dead.

Dol. Assist me, Romans,

Strike, kill the traitor.

Cas. Hear me, countrymen,
I am your friend, and your deliverer,
Have broke your chains, and set the nation free :
The conquerors of the world are now the sons
Of liberty.

Dol. O ! Romans, shall the blood
Of Cæsar——

Cas. I have slain my friend, to serve
The cause of Rome ; he wou'd have made you slaves,
And therefore have I slain him. Is there one,
Amongst you all, so base, so mean of soul,
As to be fond of slav'ry, and regret
A tyrant's loss ? Is there one Roman left
That wishes for a king ? if one there be,
Let him appear, let him complain to Cassius ;
But ye are fond of glory all, I know
Ye are, and will applaud me for the deed.

Rom. Perish his mem'ry ! Cæsar was a tyrant.

Cas. Preserve these gen'rous sentiments, ye sons
Of happy Rome, ye masters of the world ;
Antony means, I know, to tamper with you,
But you'll remember, he was Cæsar's slave,
Bred up beneath him from his infant years,
And in corruption's school has learn'd from him
The tyrant's art ; he comes to vindicate
His master, and to justify his crimes ;

Contemns

Contemns you all, and thinks he can deceive you :
 He has a right to speak, and must be heard,
 Such is the law of Rome, and to the laws
 I shall submit ; but in the people still
 Is lodg'd the pow'r supreme, to judge of Cæsar,
 Of Antony, and me : ye now once more
 Possess those rights which had been wrested from you,
 Which Cæsar took, and Cassius hath restor'd :
 He will confirm them : but I go, my friends,
 To meet great Brutus at the capitol ;
 To those deserted walls once more to bring
 Long absent justice, and our exil'd gods ;
 To calm the rage of faction, and repair
 The ruins of our liberty : for you,
 I ask you but to know your happiness,
 And to enjoy it : let no artifice
 Deceive you, but beware of Antony.

Rom. If he speak ill of Cassius, he shall die.

Cas. Romans, remember these your sacred oaths.

Rom. The friends of Rome shall ever be our care.

SCENE VIII.

ANTONY, ROMANS, DOLABELLA.

First Rom. But Antony appears.

Second Rom. What can he dare
 To offer ?

First Rom. See, his eyes are bath'd in tears :
 Hark how he sighs, he's deeply troubled.

Second Rom. O,
 He lov'd him but too well.

Ant. I did indeed :
 I lov'd him, Romans, wou'd have giv'n my life
 To save my friend's ; and who amongst you all
 Wou'd not have dy'd for Cæsar, had you known,
 Like me, his virtues ? to the laws he sell
 A noble sacrifice : I come not here
 To gild his mem'ry with a flatt'ring tale,

The

The world was witness to his deeds, the world
Proclaims his glory ; I but ask your pity,
And beg you to forgive the tears of friendship.

First Rom. Cassius, you might have shed them for
your country,

For Rome in slav'ry ; Cæsar was a hero,
But Cæsar was a tyrant too.

Second Rom. A tyrant
Cou'd have no virtues : Cassius was our friend,
And so was Brutus.

Ant. I have nought to urge
Against his murderers ; they meant, no doubt,
'To servethe state ; whilst gen'rous Cæsar pour'd
His bounties on their heads, they shed his blood ;
But, had he not been guilty, Rome wou'd ne'er
Have acted thus, he must have been to blame :
And yet did Cæsar ever make you groan
Beneath his pow'r ? did he oppress his country ?
Did he reserve the fruit of all his conquests
But for himself, or did you share the spoil ?
Were not the treasures of the conquer'd world
Laid at your feet, and lavish'd all on you ?
When he beheld his weeping countrymen,
From his triumphal car he wou'd descend
To sooth their griefs, and wipe their tears away.
What Cæsar fought for, Rome in peace enjoys ;
Rich by his bounty, by his virtues great ;
He paid the service and forgot the wrongs
Which he receiv'd ; immortal gods ! you knew
His heart was ever ready to forgive.

Rom. Cæsar was always merciful.

Ant. Alas !

Cou'd his great soul have ever stoop'd to vengeance
He yet had liv'd, and we had still been happy.
Not one of all his murderers but shar'd
His bounties ; twice had he preserv'd the life
Of Cassius—Brutus—horrible to think !
O, heav'n ! my friends, I shudder at the crimes,
The base assassin, Brutus, was—his son.

Rom. His son ! ye gods !

Ant.

Ant. I see it shocks your souls,
I see the tears trickle down your cheeks :
Yes ; Brutus is his son : but you, my friends,
You were his children, his adopted sons :
O, had ye seen his will !

Rom. What is it ? tell us.

Ant. Rome is his heir ; his treasures are your own,
And you will soon enjoy them : O, he wish'd
To serve his Romans, ev'n beyond the grave :
'Twas you alone he lov'd, for you had gone
To sacrifice his fortune and his life
In Asia's plains : O, Romans, oft he cry'd,
You are my sov'reigns, I'm the world's master,
And you are mine. Cou'd Brutus have done more,
Or Cassius ?

Rom. We detest them.

First Rom. Cæsar was
The father of his country.

Ant. But he's gone ;
Your father is no more : the pride, the glory
Of human nature, the delight of Rome,
Cut off by vile assassins ; shall he go
Unhonour'd, undistinguish'd to the tomb ?
Shall we not raise the fun'ral pile to one
So dear, the father, and the friend of Rome ?
Behold, they bring him here.

*[The further part of the stage opens, and discovers the
litters carrying the body of Cæsar, cover'd with a
bloody robe ; Antony descends from the rostrum, and
kneels down near the body.]*

Rom. O dreadful sight !

Ant. Behold the poor remains of Cæsar ! once
The first of men, that god whom you ador'd,
Whom ev'n his murth'ers lov'd, your best support,
In peace your guardian, and in war your glory,
Who made whole nations tremble, and the world
Bow down before him : is this he, ye Romans,
This bleeding corpse, is this the mighty Cæsar ?

Mark

Mark but his wounds : * here Cimber pierc'd him, there
 The perjur'd Cassius, and there Decimus ;
 There, with unnat'ral hand, the cruel Brutus
 Deep plung'd the fatal poniard : Cæsar look'd
 Towards his murth'rer, with an eye of love
 And mild forgiveness, as he sunk in death
 He call'd him by the tender name of son ;
 My child, he cry'd——

First Rom. The monster ! O that heav'n
 Had ta'en him hence before this fatal deed !
 The blood still flows. [*The people croud round the body.*]

Ant. O ! it cries out for vengeance :
 From you demands it : hearken to the voice ;
 Awake, ye Romans, hence, and follow me
 Against these vile assassins ; the best tribute
 That we can pay to Cæsar's memory,
 Is to extripate these usurpers : haste,
 And with the torch that lights his fun'ral pile
 Set fire to ev'ry traitor's house, and plunge
 Your daggers in their breasts : away, my friends,
 Let us avenge him ; let us offer up
 These bloody victims to the gods of Rome.

Rom. We follow thee, and swear by Cæsar's blood
 To be reveng'd : away.

Ant. We must not let [*To Dolabella.*]
 Their anger cool, the multitude we know
 Is ever wav'ring, fickle and inconstant :
 We'll urge them to a war, and then perhaps
 Who best revenges Cæsar may succeed him.

END of the THIRD and LAST ACT.

* The reader will perceive how closely Voltaire has here follow'd
 Shakspear, and at the same time must observe how inferior the
 copy is to the great original.



A M E L I A:

OR THE

DUKE OF FOIX.

A

T R A G E D Y.

Represented in December, 1752.



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PHYSICS



P R E F A C E.

THIS tragedy is founded on historical truth. A Duke of Brittany, in the year 1387, commanded the lord of *Bavalan*, to assassinate the constable of *Cliffon*: *Bavalan*, the day after, told the duke it was done: the duke becoming sensible of the horror of his crime, and apprehensive of the fatal consequences of it, abandon'd himself to the most violent despair; *Bavalan*, after giving him time to repent, at length told him that he lov'd him well enough to disobey his orders, &c.

The action is transported to another age and country for particular reasons.

DRAMATIS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

The DUKE of FOIX.

AMELIA.

VAMIR, Brother to the Duke of Foix.

LISOIS.

THAIS, Confidant of Amelia.

EMAR, Friend of Vamir.

SCENE, the PALACE of the DUKE of FOIX.

AMELIA.



A M E L I A:

OR, THE

DUKE OF FOIX.

A

T R A G E D Y.

ACT I. SCENE I.

AMELIA, LISOIS.

Lis. **P**Ermit a soldier, in this feat of war,
To steal a moment from the battle's rage,
And greet the fair Amelia; to the king
Thy noble heart is bound, I know, by ties
Of dearest friendship; long and faithfully
Hath Lisois serv'd the valiant duke of Foix
Who holds thee here a pris'ner: well I know
The violence of his passion for Amelia,
Foresee the dreadful consequence, and come,
With all the warmth of friendship, to advise
And to consult, to lay my heart before thee,
Perhaps 'tis not unworthy of thy notice.

VOL. XXII.

D

Ame.

Ame. The seal of truth is ever on thy lips,
I know thy firm integrity; whate'er
Thou say'st, I shall believe.

Lis. Know then, tho' long
I've serv'd the duke with most unwear'd zeal,
Through years of peril, and unnumber'd toils,
Yet cou'd I ne'er approve the fatal league
That bound him to the Moor, and took from France
The noblest of her princes; in these days
Of public discord, I have rang'd myself
Beneath no banners but what honour rais'd,
And follow'd but the dictates of my heart:
Not that, the slave of prejudice, my soul
Is blind to all the errors of a friend;
With grief I see the duke's impatient warmth,
Th' impetuous ardor of his boiling youth,
I cannot shut my eyes against his follies:
Oft times the torrent which I strive to stop
Mocks my weak pow'r, and throws down all before it,
But he has virtues that will recompense
His worst of faults: if we must follow none
But perfect princes, whose unbiass'd hearts
Are free from ev'ry vice, and ev'ry weakness,
Whom shall we serve? I love the duke; and yet
'Tis with regret I draw the hostile sword
'Gainst France: I wish he cou'd be reconcil'd.

Ame. If that cou'd e'er be done, thy influence best
Might reunite them: if he loves his glory,
Sure this misguided prince will listen to thee.
How fatal has his error been!

Lis. In vain
I've try'd to bend his haughty spirit; oft
Have I with harsh unwelcome truths attack'd him,
And sorely pierc'd his heart: but thou alone
Can'st bring him to his duty and his king:
That was my errand here: there was a time
When on the fair Amelia I had plac'd
My hopes of bliss; without abasement then
I thought you might have listen'd to my vows;
But heav'n reserv'd thee for a nobler fate.
Whilst I was absent, by the cruel Moors

Thou

THE DUKE OF FOIX.

51

Thou wert enslav'd; the happy conq'ror came,
The gallant Foix, and sav'd thee from their rage;
His was the glory, his be the reward:
His claims are strong, his youth, his rank, and pow'r,
His fame, and services, all plead for him;
Amelia's justice and her gratitude
Must bind her to him: I have no pretence,
And therefore I am silent; but if merit
Cou'd make thee mine, I wou'd dispute the prize
Ev'n with the sons of kings, nor yield Amelia
To any but to him: he is my master,
My leader, and my friend; he loves me well:
I am not a half proud half virtuous lover,
But what I still wou'd litigate with pow'r,
I give to friendship: nay, I can do more,
I can subdue the weakneſs of my heart,
And plead a rival's cause; point out the path
Of glory to thee, shew thee what is due
To that illustrious hero who preserv'd thee,
By whom thou liv'st: I can behold unmov'd,
And with unenvying eye, thy charms bestow'd
On him who best deserves them: take my heart
Between you, and accept my honest service.
This arm shall fight for both; I sacrifice
My passions to your int'rest: friendship bids me,
And I obey: my country too commands:
Remember, if the prince is yours, he soon
Will be the king's.

Ame. Thy virtues, noble youth,
Astonish me; thou giv'st th' admiring world
A rare example; canst thou be sincere?
And sure thou art so, thus to conquer love,
And give up all to friendship! all who know
Must wonder at thee: thou hast serv'd thy master,
And can'st not be an enemy to mine:
A heart so gen'rous sure must think with me:
'Tis not in souls like thine to hate their king.
Shall I then ask one favour at thy hands?

Lis. Amelia's orders shall be ever sacred:
Command, and I obey.

Ame. Thy gen'rous counsel
 Hath urg'd me to accept a noble rank
 I look'd not for, and offer'd by a prince:
 The choice, I own, does honour to Amelia,
 When I reflect, that, long before he told
 His love, he sav'd my liberty and life;
 Foe to his sov'reign, tho' the rebel Moor
 Hath drawn him from his duty and allegiance,
 Yet he has pour'd so many favors on me,
 I cannot bear to hurt him, tho', in spite
 Of all his goodness, and my gratitude,
 I must refuse him: his unhappy passion
 Afflicts me; 'tis distressful to my heart,
 For all his kindness thus to make him wretched.
 Fain wou'd I spare myself th' ungrateful task
 Of saying that I must not hear his vows:
 It is not for my feeble voice to tell
 A prince his duty; 'twere a dangerous pow'r,
 And I am far from wishing to enjoy it;
 Who can direct him better than thyself?
 Alas! my lord, 'tis not a time for love;
 The royal army at our gates, and nought
 But war and slaughter all around us: blood
 On every side! himself against my master,
 Against his brother, now in arms; all these
 Are pow'rful reasons: O, my lord, in you
 Is all my hope; forgive me; O complete
 The gen'rous work, restore me to my king;
 Let him do that, 'tis all I ask; but add
 This effort more to what thou'st done already:
 Thou hast the strongest influence o'er his heart,
 A firm and manly soul; a friend like thee,
 Respected and belov'd, will make the voice
 Of duty heard, his counsels will be laws.

Lis. Alas! those counsels will have little weight
 Against the passions that possess his soul;
 His fiery temper gives me too much cause
 To fear him: he's inclin'd to jealousy,
 And if he hears I had a thought of thee,
 'Twill drive his soul to madness, and perhaps
 Undo us all: he must be sooth'd by art;

Leave

Leave him to me, and try to reconcile
 Your jarring int'rests; weigh his offers well.
 Henceforth I'll think no more of love and thee,
 But get me to the field, the soldier's duty
 Shall engross me: if thou lov'st thy country,
 If France be dear to thee, restore her hero,
 And she will bless thee for the deed: farewell.

S C E N E II.

AMELIA, THAIS.

Ame. Restore him, said he? what! at that dear price
 Of all my happiness! it cannot be;
 'Twere infamous and base, the worst of crimes.

Tha. But wherefore is the prince thus hateful to you?
 Why in these days of discord, war, and tumult,
 Whilst faction reigns, and on our royal race
 Brother 'gainst brother arms, and ev'ry hour
 Brings new afflictions, wherefore shou'd Amelia,
 Whose gentler stars for other purposes
 Had form'd her soul, to love and to be lov'd,
 Why shou'd Amelia, with such sentiments
 Of scorn and hatred, meet a hero's vows
 Who had aveng'd her cause? The prince, thou know'st,
 Amongst his ancestors can boast the blood
 Of our first kings, and is himself a lord
 Of rich domains, and wide extended pow'r.
 He loves you, offers you his hand: can rank
 And title, objects that are envy'd still
 By all mankind, pursued with eagerness,
 And gain'd with rapture, can these only fill
 Thy heart with sorrow, and thy eyes with tears?

Ame. Because he sav'd me once, has he a right
 Now to oppress me? Must Amelia fall
 A victim to his fatal aid? I know
 I'm much indebted to him, wou'd I were not!

Tha. Nay, that's ungrateful.

Ame. Thou shalt know my heart.
 My miseries, my duty, and my fate:

I will no longer keep the secret from thee,
 'Twere cruel to distrust thee; when thou know'st
 My story, thou may'st justify thy friend.
 I must not listen to the prince's vows,
 For know, my heart is given to his brother.

Tba. Ha! to the noble Vamir!

Ame. Yes, my friend:

With mutual oaths we seal'd our mutual faith,
 And at Leucate I expected him,
 There to confirm it at the holy altar,
 When by the cruel Moors that rush'd upon us
 I was surpris'd, and made a captive; then
 The prince, to these unconquer'd savages
 In firm alliance bound, appear'd, and sav'd me;
 There's my distress: the life another sav'd
 Must be devoted to the faithful Vamir.

Tba. But why then thus conceal thy passion? why
 Nourish a hopeless flame thou shoud'st extinguish?
 He wou'd respect this sacred tie, and check
 His fruitless passion.

Ame. O I must not tell him:

The brothers, to complete my sorrows, arm'd
 Against each other, have ta'en different parties
 In this destructive war; the faithful Vamir
 Fights for his king. Thou know'st the violence
 Of his proud rival: all I can oppose
 To his fierce rage is melancholy silence;
 Ev'n yet he knows not that in happier times
 The gallant Vamir had engag'd my heart:
 To tell it him wou'd fire his jealous soul,
 And only make Amelia more unhappy.
 'Tis time to quit this fatal place, the king
 With pleasure will receive me: let us hence,
 The pris'ners, Thais, from these walls ev'n now
 Are breaking forth, and meditate their flight:
 They will conduct us: I defy all danger,
 Will hazard all for freedom and repose.

Tba. Behold the Duke.

Ame. I cannot speak to him,
 The starting tear wou'd soon betray me: what
 Wou'd I not give for ever to avoid him!

SCENE

S C E N E III.

DUKE of FOIX, LISOIS, THAIS.

Duke. Avoid me! fly me! Thais, stay: thou know'st
[To Thais.

My sorrows, know'st I love her to distraction;
My life depends on her; but let her not
Abuse her pow'r, and drive me to despair:
I hate her cold respect, her poor return
Of gratitude to all my warmth of passion:
Delay is cruel, 'tis the worst refusal;
'Tis an affront my heart will ne'er forgive:
In vain she boasts to me her loyal zeal,
Her fond attachments to her royal master,
'Tis time that all shou'd yield to love and me:
Here let her find her country and her king;
'To me she owes her honour, and her life;
And I owe all to her, I owe my love:
United as we are by ev'ry claim,
We must not part, the altar is prepar'd,
She shall be mine; go, tell her all is ready.

S C E N E IV.

The DUKE, LISOIS.

Lis. My lord, remember that our kingdom's safety
Depends on this decisive day.

Duke. I know it,
And am resolv'd to conquer or to die
Amelia's husband.

Lis. But the foe advances,
And soon will be upon us.

Duke. Let him come,
I mean to fight him; think'st thou I'm a coward?
Think'st thou the tyrant love shall e'er extinguish
My noble thirst of glory? though she hates,

She shall admire me still: she boasts indeed
 Her sov'reign empire o'er my captive heart,
 But shall not blast my virtue and my fame.
 No: thy reproaches are unjust, my friend
 Was too severe; condemn me not unjustly,
 Love ne'er unnerves the gallant sons of France:
 Ev'n from the bosom of success and joy,
 Fearless they fly to arms, and rush on death:
 And I too will die worthy of Amelia.

Lis. Say rather, worthy of thyself: I think
 To day of nothing but the public welfare;
 I talk of battles, and thou speak'st of love.
 My lord, I've seen the army of the foe:
 Vamir, so fame reports, is arm'd against us:
 From us, I know, he hath long since withdrawn
 His valiant troops, I know him not, but hear
 He's of a noble nature: if his soul,
 Inspir'd by duty, and by glory warm'd,
 Still feels the tender tie that link'd your hearts
 In earlier years, he may assist us now,
 And be the means of making wish'd for peace.
 My cares——

Duke. Away: I wou'd not be oblig'd
 Thus to a brother: shall I sue for peace,
 And ask forgiveness? yet it hurts my soul
 To think that Vamir is my foe: I still
 Remember our past friendship, and the love
 I bore him once; but since he will oppose me,
 Since he's no longer our's, why let him go,
 And serve his king.

Lis. Thy fiery temper braves
 Too far the patience of an easy monarch.

Duke. A monarch! the mere phantom of a king,
 Unworthy of his race, a royal slave,
 In golden chains, and seated on a throne
 Subjected to a petty officer:
 I'm not afraid of Pepin their arch-tyrant;
 I hate a subject that wou'd frighten me,
 And I despise a king who can't command:
 If he permits a rebel to usurp
 The sov'reign pow'r, I'll still support my own:

This

This heart's too proud to bend beneath the laws
Of these new upstarts who oppress their king:
Clovis, my royal ancestor, ne'er taught
His sons to cringe beneath a haughty master,
At least these faithful Arabs will revenge me;
If I must feel a tyrant, let him be
A stranger.

Lif. You detest these * governors,
But they have sav'd our empire, which your friends,
The Arabs, but for them had overthrown:
I tremble at this new alliance: Spain
Before you stands a terrible example:
These savage plund'ers, these new tyrants dig
Our graves with our own hands. 'Twere better far
To yield with prudence.

Duke. What, fall down and sue
For mercy!

Lif. Your true int'rest long forgotten——

Duke. Revenge is my first int'rest.

Lif. Love and anger

Too long have rul'd the bosom of my friend.

Duke. I know they have, but cannot conquer nature.

Lif. You may, you ought; nay, I'll not flatter you,
But ev'n, tho' I condemn, I'll follow thee:
'Tis a friend's duty to point out the faults
Of him he loves; to counsel, to exhort,
To save him from the dang'rous precipice:
This I have done for thee, but thou wilt fall,
And I must perish with thee.

Duke. O my friend,
What hast thou said?

Lif. But what I ought to say:
And wou'd to heav'n that thou had'st listen'd to me!
What dost thou purpose?

D 5

Duke.

* The original is *'vous haïssez un Maire;* literally translated you hate a *Mayor*. *Maire* may perhaps sound very well in a *French* ear, but in *English* it is rather unpoetical, and so far beneath the dignity of the *Buskin*, that I am not certain whether the single word *Mayor*, repeated two or three times, wou'd not throw an air of ridicule over a whole scene, and perhaps contribute in a great measure to damn a modern tragedy.

Duke. When my ardent hopes
 Shall be fulfill'd, when the ungrateful maid
 Shall give sweet peace to my distracted mind,
 Then will I hear the counsels of my friend.
 What can I purpose now, or what design,
 Till I have seen the tyrant who must guide
 My future fate? let her determine for me,
 Let her save me, and I will save my country.



ACT II. SCENE I.

The DUKE of FOIX alone.

She cannot sure again refuse to see me,
 And urge me to despair! she dare not do it:
 Fool that I am to give her thus the pow'r,
 How weak is my proud heart to yield itself
 A voluntary slave! go, throw thyself,
 Mean as thou art, beneath the tyrant's feet;
 Go, make thy life dependant on a word,
 A look, a smile, from proud Amelia; pass
 From love to fury, and from tears to rage;
 'Tis the last time I e'er will speak to her.
 I go——

SCENE II.

The DUKE, AMELIA, and THAIS, who advance
 from the upper end of the stage.

Ame. There's hope, my Thais; yet I tremble.
 Wou'd Vamir hazard this bold enterprise?
 'Tis full of danger; ha! what do I see?

[*Advancing towards the Duke.*]

Duke. Amelia, what hath this way led thy steps
 I know not, but thy eyes too plainly tell me
 That I was not the object of their search:

What!

What! still turn from me, still insult the heart
That dotes upon thee! cruel tyrant, thus
To blast the laurels planted on my brow:
O if Amelia's hand had plac'd them there
They might have flourish'd, but she has forgot
Her plighted faith, and broke her flatt'ring promise.

Ame. Thou never hadst my faith, I never gave
My promise, gratitude is all I owe thee.

Duke. Did I not offer thee my hand?

Ame. Thou didst:

It was an honour which I cou'd not merit,
And which I never sought, but I receiv'd it
With due respect; you thought, no doubt, a rank
So glorious must have dazzled poor Amelia.
At length, my lord, 'tis time to undeceive you;
I do it with regret, because I know
It will offend you, but I must be plain:
In short, my lord, I love my king too well
To think of wedding with his foe: thy blood,
I know, is noble; mine is spotless yet,
Nor will be stain'd with foul disloyalty,
And I inherit from my ancestors
The fix'd abhorrence of my country's foes:
Nor will I e'er acknowledge for a master
The friend of tyrants, be he e'er so great:
Such is my firm resolve; perhaps, my lord,
It may seem harsh, but you oblig'd me to it.

Duke. This is a language, madam, which I own
I look'd not for; I never cou'd have thought
That angry heav'n, to make me doubly wretched,
Wou'd choose Amelia for its instrument
Of vengeance: you have study'd long in secret
The arts of black ingratitude, of scorn
And insult, and now open all your heart.
I was a stranger to this patriot zeal,
This most heroic ardor for thy country,
This fetch of policy; but tell me, madam,
Whom have you here but this insulted lover,
The injur'd Foix, to succour and support you?
Thou hast reproach'd me with my new alliance,
Those faithful friends on whom I here rely

For all my safety, and for all my pow'r ;
 Without their aid thou had'st been still a captive ;
 To them you ow'd your liberty and life,
 And am I thus rewarded ?

Ame. You prolong'd
 My wretched days ; but are they therefore yours,
 And may I not dispose them as I please ?
 Did you preserve me but to make me wretched,
 To be a tyrant o'er the life you sav'd ?

Duke. Ungrateful woman, thou deserv'st the name
 Of tyrant most, for now I read thy soul,
 See thro' the thin disguise, behold too plainly
 My own dishonour, and thy treach'rous falsehood :
 I know thou lov'st another, but whoe'er
 He be that thus hath robb'd me of thy heart,
 Fear thou my love, and tremble at my rage ;
 For, if he be on earth, I'll find the traitor,
 And tear him from thee : if amidst its horrors
 My soul cou'd feel one momentary joy,
 'Twou'd be to make thee wretched.

Ame. No : my lord,
 Indeed it wou'd not ; reason will forbid it :
 Thy soul's too noble to oppress with woe
 A life which thou had'st sav'd ; but if thy heart
 Shou'd e'er stoop so low, thy virtues and thy
 Goodness in my memory still shall live,
 And only thy unkindness be forgotten.
 I pity, and forgive thee ; thou wilt blush
 Hereafter at the thought of inj'ring me ;
 Spite of thy threats, my soul is yet unmov'd,
 Nor dreads thy anger, nor defies thy pow'r.

Duke. Forgive the transports of a mind disturb'd,
 The rage of love embitter'd by despair ;
 Lissais, I find, holds secret conf'rence with you,
 Abets your falsehood, and defends your conduct ;
 Leans to the royal party, and combines
 In vain with you to make a convert of me :
 It seems I'm to be govern'd by your will,
 And not my own : your converse is the same,
 The same your purpose ; but why use these arms
 Against me ? to persuade my easy heart,

Why

Why must Amelia seek a stranger's aid?
A word will win me, if 'tis spoke by love.

Amc. My heart, I own, hath open'd to thy friend
Its hopes and fears, but he hath done much more
Than he had promis'd: pity then my tears,
Pity my sorrows; be thyself again;
Subdue a passion which Amelia must not,
Cannot return: accept my gratitude,
'Tis all I have to give thee.

Duke. Lisois then,
And he alone, enjoys thy confidence,
Thy friendship, more perhaps; I see it now.

Amc. You may perhaps hereafter, but at present
You have no right, sir, to controul my thoughts,
My actions, or my words; no right to blame me,
Or to complain: I sought thy friend's assistance,
And he has giv'n it me; I wish, my lord,
That you wou'd learn to act and think like him.

S C E N E III.

The DUKE alone.

'Tis well: this base, ungrateful, perjur'd woman,
Without a blush, confesses all her falsehood;
The myst'ry is unfolded now: one friend,
One only friend, I had, and he destroys me.
Friendship! vain phantom, unsubstantial shade,
So often sought for, and so seldom found,
Thou ever hadst some wholesome draught to pour
Into my cup of sorrow: but at last
Thou too, like love, hast cruelly deceiv'd me!
For the reward of all my errors past
I have but this, that no allurements now,
No flatt'ring pleasures, henceforth shall betray me;
For from this hour I will be fond—of nothing.
But lo the traitor comes with cruel hand
To tear my wounds, and make them bleed afresh.

S C E N E

SCENE IV.

LISOIS, DUKE.

My lord, I come obedient to your orders :
 But why that frown, those eyes of discontent
 That scowl upon me ? has thy soul, long time
 The sport of passion, weigh'd in reason's scale
 Thy int'rest, and thy happiness ?

Duke. It has.

Lis. And what was the result ?

Duke. My eyes are open'd
 To falsehood and deceit ; I've learn'd to find
 A rival and a traitor in my friend.

Lis. How's that !

Duke. It is enough.

Lis. Too much, my lord :
 Who is the traitor ?

Duke. Can'st thou ask me who ?
 Who but thyself was privy to the wrongs
 I have receiv'd, who else must answer for them ?
 I know, Amelia hath convers'd with thee
 Here, in the palace ; when I mention'd thee
 She trembled : this affected silence speaks
 Your guilt more plainly, and I know not which
 Most to abhor, Amelia, or——my friend.

Lis. Can'st thou yet listen to that friend ?

Duke. I can.

Lis. Think'st thou I still am anxious for my fame ?
 Dost thou esteem, and can'st thou yet believe me ?

Duke. I will : for till this hour I thought thee virtuous,
 And held thee for my friend.

Lis. Those noble titles
 Have hitherto conducted me thro' life ;
 But wherefore justify myself to thee ?
 Thou'st not deserv'd it : know, Amelia's charms
 Long since had touch'd my heart, before thy hand
 Had set her free, and sav'd her precious life,
 But by the ties of gratitude she's thine :

Thou

Thou hast deserv'd her by thy services :
 For me, I'm more the soldier than the soft
 And tender lover ; I despise the art
 Of base seduction, fit for courts alone,
 And flatt'ry's smooth perfidiousness ; my soul
 Is made of firmer stuff : I talk'd indeed
 Of marriage to her ; and that sacred tie,
 Knit by esteem and fair equality
 Of fortune and condition, might have made her
 More happy far than rank and titles cou'd,
 That stand upon a dang'rous precipice :
 But yesternight, you know, I visited
 Your ramparts, when your jealous soul alarm'd
 Discover'd all its passion : I observ'd it :
 To day I saw the object of your grief,
 Your lov'd Amelia, and beheld her charms
 With eyes of cold indiff'rence : o'er myself
 I gain'd an easy conquest : I did more,
 Pleaded for thee, for an ungrateful friend,
 And urg'd a passion which I can't approve ;
 Recall'd the mem'ry of thy bounties past,
 Thy glory and thy rank, acknowledg'd faults
 I knew you had, and number'd all your virtues ;
 All this against myself I did for thee ;
 For my friend's happiness gave up my own :
 And if the sacrifice is still imperfect,
 Shew me the rival that still dares t'oppose thee,
 And I will stake my life to do thee justice.

Duke. My friend, thou soar'st above me ; I am fall'n,
 Abash'd, confounded : who cou'd see Amelia
 And not adore her ? but to conquer thus
 Thy passion ! O, thou ne'er cou'dst have lov'd her.

Lis. I did : but love, like other passions, acts
 With diff'rent force on diff'rent minds.

Duke. I love
 Too well, my friend, and cannot imitate
 The virtue I admire : my foolish heart——

Lis. I ask not for thy praises, but thy love ;
 And if thou think'st that I have merited
 Aught at thy hands, O do but serve thyself,
 Thy happiness is Lisois' best reward.

Thou

Thou seest with what determin'd hate thy brother
 Pursues the Moor, I dread the consequence :
 The people groan beneath this foreign yoke,
 Soon, I foresee, the empire will unite
 Their scatter'd pow'rs, new enemies still rise
 Against us, the poor blood of Clovis still
 Is worshipp'd by the croud, and soon or late
 The branches of this sacred tree, that long
 Have been beneath the storm, again shall rise,
 Spring with fresh verdure, and o'ershade the land.
 Plac'd by thy rank and fortunes near the throne,
 Long time thou wer't thy king and country's friend ;
 But, in the days of public discord, fate
 Attach'd thee to another case ; perhaps
 New int'rests now may call for new connections,
 And what united may dissolve the tie ;
 The pow'r of these despotic governors
 May be restrain'd, and weaken'd by thy hand——

Duke. I wish it were so: think'st thou then Amelia
 Wou'd listen to me? if I shou'd embrace
 The royal party, might she still be mine?

Lif. I am a stranger to Amelia's heart :
 But what are her designs, her views to thee?
 Must love alone decide the nation's fate?
 In Touraine's field, when gallant Clovis fought,
 And, o'er the haughty conquerors of Rome
 Victorious, stopp'd the bloody Arian's hand,
 That dealt destruction round us, did he save
 His country, think'st thou, but to please a mistress?
 This arm against a rival is prepar'd
 To serve my friend, but I wou'd serve him more,
 Wou'd cure him of this fond destructive passion ;
 This love deceives us, we're too fearful of him ;
 We wound ourselves, and lay the blame on him ;
 The coward's tyrant, and the hero's slave ;
 He may be conquer'd ; Lisois has subdu'd him,
 And shall he triumph o'er the blood of kings
 Who never yet submitted to a foe?
 Awake, my friend, and be our great example
 In ev'ry virtue !

Duke.

Duke. Yes, I will do all,
 All for Amelia: she must yield at last.
 Her laws, her king, her master, shall be mine:
 I have no will but her, and in her eyes
 Will read my duty, and my fate: possess'd
 Of the dear treasure, will be reconcil'd
 To ev'ry foe. O how my heart enjoys
 The pleasing hope! I had no cause to fear,
 I have no rival: if thou art not lov'd
 I can have none: who in this court wou'd dare
 To cast one look towards Amelia? Now
 Her vain pretexts are vanish'd: reason, glory,
 My int'rest, and my birth, the sacred right
 Of my great ancestors, all, all unite
 To bind the nuptial chain, and make me happy.
 Henceforth I am the king's, and will support him;
 So virtue bids, and beauty has commanded.
 On this blest day will I confirm the oaths
 I made to love: away, my friend, I leave
 My int'rest and my fortunes to thy care.

Lis. Permit me then, my lord, to seek the king:
 I cou'd have wish'd that this important change
 Were to the hero not the lover due;
 But be it as it may, th' effect's too glorious
 To blame the cause: I triumph in thy weakness,
 And bless for once the lucky pow'r of love.

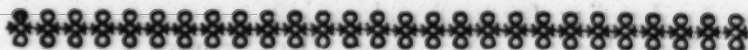
S C E N E V.

The DUKE, LISOIS, an OFFICER.

Offic. My lord, the foe advances; we expect
 A fierce assault, and wait your orders; time
 Is precious.

Duke. Cruel fate! to counteract
 My noble purpose! then farewell to peace,
 And welcome vict'ry! I'll deserve Amelia:
 I heed not these rash fools: of all the foes
 I have to conquer, there's but one to fear,
 And that's—Amelia.

A C T



ACT III. SCENE I.

DUKE of FOIX, LISOIS.

Duke. **T**H E day is ours ; thanks to thy friendly hand
That guided my rash youth ; thy noble soul,
In peace or war, is my best counsellor.

Lif. The glorious fire that animates thy heart
Must always conquer, when 'tis check'd by prudence,
As here it was : preserve this happy virtue,
'Twill make thee happy, and 'twill make thee great ;
The coward's restless, but the hero, calm.

Duke. How is the lover ? can he ever taste
Of sweet tranquillity ? but say, my friend,
This unknown chief, that mounted on our ramparts,
And with his single arm so long suspended
The doubtful vict'ry : I grew jealous of him :
Where is he ? what became of him ?

Lif. Surrounded
By slaughter'd friends, alone long time he stood,
And brav'd opposing legions ; but what most
Surpris'd us, when at length he had escap'd
From ev'ry danger, wond'rous to relate !
He yielded up himself a pris'ner to us ;
Conceals his rank and name, accuses heav'n,
And begs for instant death. One friend alone
Attends him, and partakes his sorrows.

Duke. Lisois,
Who can this bold this fearless soldier be ?
He wore his beaver down : some secret charm
O'erpower'd my trembling soul when I oppos'd him
Whether this fatal passion that enslaves me
Hath spread its weakness o'er each faculty,
And left the soft impression on my soul,
Or that my bleeding country's voice alarm'd
This conscious heart, and silently reproach'd me.

Lif.

Lif. As for the weakness of thy soul, advice
 I know were vain, but sure thy country's voice
 May still be heard; now is the time to shew
 The greatness of thy soul, and give us peace.
 Fortune, that smil'd on us to-day, perhaps
 May frown to-morrow, and thy pride be forc'd
 To sue for pardon to a haughty foe.
 Since thou art happy, and Amelia's thine,
 Now rest thy glory on the common cause,
 This brave unknown may forward our designs;
 Let us improve the lucky moment.

Duke. Yes,
 My friend, I will do all to serve Amelia,
 Her cause is mine: I must prepare the minds
 Of my brave followers for the change; to thee,
 And to thy happy counsels, ev'ry bliss,
 Glory and peace, and hymeneal joys,
 To thee I owe, to friendship and to love.

S C E N E II.

LISOIS, VAMIR, and EMAR at the further end
 of the stage.

Lif. It is the noble pris'ner, and his friend,
 If I mistake not: this way they advance;
 He seems o'erwhelm'd with deep despair.

Vam. O heav'n!

Where am I? whither dost thou lead me?

Lif. Stranger,
 Whoe'er thou art, be comforted; thy fate
 Hath thrown thee into noble hands: thou'lt find
 A gen'rous master, who can see desert
 Ev'n in a foe: may I not ask thy name?

Vam. I am a poor abandon'd wretch, the sport
 Of fortune, one whose least affliction is
 To be a captive, and from ev'ry eye
 Wou'd wish to hide the story of my fate:
 It is enough to be supremely wretched,

Without

Without this cruel witness of my woe :
Too soon my name and sorrows will be known.

Lis. Respect is due to misery like thine ;
I will not urge thee further, but retire :
Perhaps ev'n here thy soul may find relief
In gen'rous treatment, and a milder fate:

S C E N E III.

V A M I R, E M A R.

Vam. A milder fate! I must not hope for it :
O I have liv'd too long.

Emar. Thank heav'n, my lord,
That we are fall'n amongst such noble foes,
And shall not groan beneath a stranger's pow'r.

Vam. No yoke sometimes so galling as a brother's

Emar. But you were bred together, and the ties
Of tend'rest friendship link'd your hearts.

Vam. They did :
But O! the friendship of our early years
Soon takes its flight: he lov'd me once, and still
This heart retains a brother's kindness for him :
I cannot hate him, tho' he conquer'd me.

Emar. He knows not yet how great a captive comes
To grace his triumph ; knows not that a brother
Is in his pow'r, whom vengeance had inspir'd.—

Vam. No : Emar, never did a thought of vengeance
Enter my heart ; a diff'rent passion sway'd
The soul of Vamir: can it be, just heav'n !
Or is it but the lying voice of fame,
That my Amelia's false, that she has broke
Her solemn vows ? for whom too ? added guilt
To her, and double sorrow to thy friend !
The sacred laws of nature, and the ties
Of tender love, all broken, all betray'd !
Unjust, inhuman brother !

Emar. Knows he then
How dear a treasure he hath robb'd thee of

In thy Amelia? did not Vamir say
That he was still a stranger to thy love?

Vam. But she is not: she knows what solemn ties,
What strict engagements, bound us to each other:
That at the altar, e'er we had confirm'd
Our mutual vows, the barb'rous Moor rush'd in,
And tore her from me; the base ravishers
Escap'd my vengeance, and my happier brother
Enjoys the precious treasure Vamir lost.
Ungrateful woman! Came I here, my friend,
But to reproach her? what will it avail?
She will not listen to my fond complaint:
But to my royal master I have liv'd
A faithful servant, and to false Amelia,
And faithful will I die: when she shall know
How well I lov'd her, she may shed a tear,
And in a brother's arms lament my fate.

Emar. Repress thy sorrows; see, the Duke approaches.

Vam. Be still my heart.

S C E N E IV.

DUKE of FOIX, VAMIR, EMAR.

Duke. This mystery alarms me:
But I must see the noble captive: ha!
He turns aside with horror.

Vam. Hateful life!
Must I support thee still? must I again
Behold the faithless wretch?

Duke. What do I hear?

Vam. Dost thou not know me?

Duke. Ha! my brother! Vamir!

Vam. Alas! too sure I am that wretched brother,
Thy vanquish'd foe, a poor abandon'd captive.

Duke. Thou art my brother still, and I forgive thee;
But 'tis most strange, and most unnatural:
Cou'd the king find no instrument but thee
To execute his vengeance on my head?
What had I done to Vamir?

Vam.

Vam. Made his life

Unhappy: wou'd that thou had'st ta'en it from me!

Duke. Dreadful effects of civil strife!

Vam. More dreadful

Are the deep wounds that pierce the heart of Vamir.

Duke. Against another foe I might have shewn
A soldier's courage, but I pity thee.

Vam. Pity thyself, the wretch who has betray'd
His country, and deceiv'd the king that lov'd him;
A traitor, and unworthy of thy race.

Duke. Brand me not, Vamir, with th' opprobrious name
Of traitor, lest I shou'd forget myself,
And spurn thee for the insult: no, my brother,
I'm not that base ungrateful wretch thou think'st me;
Thou see'st me ready to restore fair peace,
And heal the wounds of my divided country.

Vam. Thou heal our wounds! thou—

Duke. Yes: the day that seem'd
So fatal to thy peace shall quench the flames
Of public discord, and unite us all.

Vam. O'tis a day of sorrow.

Duke. Of delight
And joy, the day that crowns my wishes—

Vam. How!

Duke. Yes, Vamir, all is chang'd, and I am happy.

Vam. It may be so: I heard indeed thy heart
These three months past has been the slave of love;
And if report says true, most violent
And fierce thy passion.

Duke. Thou hast heard aright;
I love her ev'n to madness: thou art come
In happy hour to make our bliss complete.
Yes: I will lay my friends, my foes, my ev'ry claim,
Revenge and glory, all beneath her feet.
Go, tell her two unhappy brothers, long

[*To his attendants.*

By adverse fate to diff'rent int'rests bound,
Wait but a look from her to be united.

Blame not my passion, Vamir, when thou see'st

[*To Vamir.*

The lovely object, soon wilt thou approve it.

Vam.

Vam. And does she love thee? cruel thought! [*Aside.*

Duke. At least

She ought: one obstacle alone remain'd,
And that shall be remov'd,

Vam. Inhuman brother!

[*Aside.*

Know'lt thou what led me to this fatal place,
And mean'ft thou to insult me?

Duke. Let us bury

In deep oblivion ev'ry thought of discord;
Behold, the fair Amelia comes.

SCENE V.

DUKE of FOIX, VAMIR, AMELIA.

Ame. O heav'n!

What do I see? I die.

Duke. Amelia, listen,

And mark how happiness ariseth oft

From our misfortunes; this day I have conquer'd,

And this day found a brother; thou, my Vamir,

Shalt be a witness to the pow'r of love.

What nor Amelia's pray'rs, nor her reproaches,

My gen'rous friend, my country, and my king,

Long time in vain solicited, her charms

At length have won: to them I yield submissive.

Amelia, whilst I was thy sov'reign's foe,

Thou wou'd'st not listen to my vows: henceforth

I have no laws, no friends, no king, but thine:

So love commands, and love shall be obey'd.

Vamir, thou'rt free: be thou the messenger

Of welcome tidings to the court: away,

And tell the king I hasten to present

His fair ally, the conqu'ror who subdued

A rebel's heart, and of a dang'rous foe

Hath made a faithful subject; chang'd by her,

And her alone.

Vam. 'Tis as I wish'd: my fate

Will soon be known: speak, and pronounce our doom.

Duke.

Duke. Amelia, speak, art thou not satisfy'd
With my submission? Is it not enough
To see a conqueror thus humbly kneel
Before thee? Can my life alone content
Thy cruel heart? Take it, ungrateful woman!
I wish'd but to preserve it for thy sake;
For thee alone I liv'd, for thee will die.

Ame. I am astonish'd, and my fault'ring voice
Will scarce give utterance to my words:—my lord,
If thy great soul laments thy country's fate,
And feels for her distress, thy gen'rous care
Must spring from nobler motives than the wish
To serve Amelia; thou hast heard the voice
Of pow'rful nature; what hath love to do
Where only honour hath a right to dictate?

Duke. 'Tis thy own work, Amelia, all thy own:
O'er ev'ry int'rest, ev'ry passion, love
Superior reigns; reproach me, cover me
With shame, no matter: I must force thy heart;
Come, to the altar.

Vam. Dar'st thou——

Ame. No, my lord;
I'd sooner die: my life's at thy command,
But not my heart: there is a fatal bar
Between us, and I never can be thine.

Duke. 'Tis well, ungrateful—dost thou hear her,
But I'll be calm: I'll not complain of thee, [Vamir?
I see thee now: the soft persuasive arts
That call our passions forth, the flatt'ring hope
That's giv'n but to betray, the subtle poison
Spred o'er our hearts, deceitful all and vain,
No longer shall seduce my easy faith,
The eye of reason hath detected them,
And the same art that bound hath set me free:
I will not blush before thee, Vamir: no,
I will not be despis'd: but let me see
This hidden rival, bring him here before me,
And I will yield him up the worthless prize;
For know, I have contempt enough for both
To wish you were united; that alone
Shou'd be your punishment.

Ame.

Ame. Perhaps, my lord,
 'Twere fittest for Amelia to retire
 In silence, but I hold my honour dear,
 And must defend it: I have been accus'd
 Before your brother, and must answer thee.
 Know then, I'm destin'd to another's arms;
 I own my love, my tender passion for him;
 Amelia were unworthy of his heart,
 Had she e'er giv'n a distant hope to thee:
 But you wou'd seize my faith and liberty,
 As if they were by right of conquest thine.
 I ow'd thee much, but injuries like these,
 My lord, discharge the debt of gratitude,
 And cancel all: I saw, and pity'd long
 The violence of thy fruitless passion for me;
 Do not then make me hate thee: I rejected
 Thy proffer'd vows, but never scorn'd thy love:
 I wish'd for thy esteem, and gave thee mine.

Duke. Perfidious woman! nought hast thou deserv'd
 But my resentment, which, thou soon shalt know,
 Is equal to my love: you waited then
 For Vamir to be witness of my shame!
 I shou'd have thought he was himself the traitor,
 If—but he ne'er beheld thy fatal charms,
 My happier brother never knew Amelia.
 Who is this rival? let me know his name,
 But think not I will tamely yield to him.
 No: I deceiv'd thee there, but cannot long
 Diffemble; I will drag thee to the altar,
 There, as he dies in torment, shall he see
 Our hands united; I will dip in blood
 The torch of Hymen.: well I know that princes
 Have been despis'd for mean and vulgar slaves,
 But I shall find him.

Vam. Why shou'd'st thou suppose
 This rival so contemptible?

Duke. And why
 Shou'd'st thou excuse him? Did'st thou never know her?
 'Tis dreadful to conceive it. If thou did'st,
 Now, traitor, tremble.

Vam. Vamir tremble? No:

Too long already I have born in silence
Thy cruel insults; know me now, barbarian,
Know a despair that's equal to thy own:
Strike here; behold thy brother, and thy rival.

Duke. Thou, Vamir, thou?

Vam. Yes: for these two years past
We've been united in the strictest bonds
Of tender love; the only good on earth
I wish'd to keep, thy cruel hand hath strove
To ravish from me, made my life unhappy;
Judge of my mis'ries by thy own: we both
Are jealous, both were born the slaves of passion:
Hatred and love, resentment and despair,
Possess our souls, and all in the extreme:
Thou wert my rival, therefore I oppos'd thee:
Furious, and blind, I ran, I flew to save
The object of my love; not all thy pow'r
Restrain'd me, nor my weakness, time nor place,
Not ev'n thy noble courage; love prevail'd
O'er friendship, and the ties of blood: be thou
Cruel like me, like me unnatural,
Whilst I have life, thou never can'st enjoy
Thy conquest, never can'st possess Amelia:
Strike then and punish, shed thy brother's blood;
But when thou dragg'st her with thee to the altar,
Remember, she's thy sister, and my wife.

Duke. Guards, seize the traitor, take him from my
sight.

Ame. Stay, cruel prince; art thou inflexible,
Deaf to the voice of nature; O, my lord!

Vam. Sue not for me, Amelia, Vamir's fate
Is to be envy'd: he most claims your pity
Who hath betray'd his king, and injur'd thee:
I am reveng'd, the victory is mine;
For thou art hated here, and I'm belov'd.

Ame. O dearest prince, my lord, see at your feet——
[*Kneeling to the Duke.*]

Duke. Away with him: rise, madam, for your tears
And fruitless pray'rs to save a traitor's life,
But pour fresh poison o'er my wounded heart,

That

That bleeds for thee ; but I will die, Amelia,
Not unreveng'd : when thou shalt feel my rage,
Accuse thyself ; the work is all thy own.

Ame. I cannot leave thee : O, my lord, yet hear——

Duke. If I must hear thee, speak, go on.

S C E N E VI.

The DUKE, VAMIR, AMELIA, LISOIS.

Lif. My lord,

The people are in arms ; at Vamir's name
They rose tumultuous, and on ev'ry side
Disorder reigns ; th' affrighted soldiers leave
Their colours, and in wild confusion fly :
Mean time the foe unites his scatter'd pow'rs,
And rushes on us.

Duke. Go, ungrateful woman !

Thou hast not long to glory in thy crimes ;

Follow her——

[*To one of her attendants.*]

I must to the factious croud

And shew myself : thou, Lisois, guard this traitor.

S C E N E VII.

LISOIS, VAMIR.

Lif. Art thou a traitor ? could'st thou thus disgrace
Thy noble blood, to violate the laws
Of nature ? cou'd a prince so far forget
His duty and himself ?

Vam. I never did :

The people's just : my brother is a rebel,
And has betray'd his master.

Lif. Hear me, Vamir :

My soul desires no greater happiness
Than to unite you : long have I beheld
With deep regret my bleeding country's woes,

Our fields laid waste, and nature sacrific'd
 To discord and revenge; the haughty Moor,
 Rais'd on our ruins, menacing the state,
 Which we have weaken'd by our own divisions.
 O, if thou bear'st a heart that's truly noble,
 And worthy of thy race, now save thy country;
 Exert thy pow'r to reconcile the king,
 Soften thy brother, and put out the flames
 Of civil war.

Vam. Impossible! thy cares
 Are fruitless all and vain: if nought but discord,
 Revenge and hatred, led me to the field,
 Had glory and ambition fir'd my breast,
 Thou might'st have hoped indeed to re-unite us;
 But there's a bar more fatal still behind.

Lis. What cou'd it be! O tell me, Vamir.

Vam. Love:

Love that has fill'd this breast with savage fury,
 And made my brother cruel and inhuman.

Lis. Good heav'n! that vain caprice shou'd thus de-
 The noblest purposes! Almighty love, [stroy
 Can'st thou reverse the laws of nature, fill
 With unrelenting hate the jealous hearts
 Of fondest brothers, and in ev'ry clime
 By private passions work the public ruin?
 Vamir, I feel for both, but long have serv'd
 Thy brother; I must hence, and second him
 Against thy factious friends: the strife is dreadful,
 And much I fear will have a bloody end;
 But I must fly to succour him: farewell;
 Thou art my pris'ner, but I leave thee here;
 Give me thy word, that shall suffice.

Vam. I do.

Lis. Wou'd I cou'd knit you in the bonds of peace!
 But much more to be fear'd than all thy foes,
 And far more fatal, is the tyrant, love.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

VAMIR, AMELIA, EMAR.

Ame. O Vamir, how the hand of heav'n hath mark'd
My life with sad variety of woe !
The chance of war, that tore me from thy arms,
Once more hath join'd us ; but, alas ! we meet
On mournful terms, meet but to part ; my Vamir,
Did'st thou not say it must be so ?

Vam. It must :

Thou seest me chain'd by honour's laws beneath
A rival's pow'r : my sacred word is giv'n :
Vamir may die, but must not follow thee.

Ame. Thou who hast dar'd to fight, art thou afraid
To flee from him ?

Vam. I am : my honour binds me :
Take thou advantage of the gen'ral tumult,
Which favours thy retreat : a guard attends
To aid thy flight ; heav'n will protect thy virtues ;
Hope for the best.

Ame. What can Amelia hope,
When thou art from her ?

Vam. 'Tis but for a day.

Ame. O but that day will be an age to me.
Grant, heav'n ! my tears and terrors may be vain.
The Moor, I know, thirsts for Vamir's blood ;
Think'st thou thy brother will not give it him ?
He loves with fury, and he hates with rancour ;
His hatred, like his love, is in extreme :
He is thy rival, and the Moor's ally.
I tremble for thee.

Vam. He wou'd never dare——

Ame. O his impetuous passion knows no bounds.

Vam. He must be taught to know them soon : the king
Comes to revenge us : half his force already
Throngs to the royal standard ; if thou lov'st me,

Fly, my Amelia, from th' impending storm,
 From dreadful slaughter, and the din of arms,
 And all the terrors of a bloody field ;
 But, above all, avoid my furious rival,
 Whose jealous love, despis'd, will turn to rage ;
 Avoid an insult Vamir must revenge,
 Or perish in th' attempt : my dear Amelia,
 Hope of my life, the only good on earth
 I have to boast, do not expose thyself
 To needless dangers, but retire in safety.

Ame. Why wilt thou hazard then thy precious life
 And stay without Amelia ?

Vam. When thou'rt safe,
 I shall not fear my brother ; soon perhaps
 Vamir may prove his best support : to-day
 I am his pris'ner, but perchance to-morrow
 May be his patron, and persuade the king
 To spare a rebel : to protect my rival
 Were noble triumph. Haste, Amelia, leave
 This seat of danger.

Ame. Wheresoever fate
 Shall cast my hapless lot, I'll carry with me
 My hatred and my love ; 'mid'st ev'ry danger,
 In the wild desert, or the gloomy dungeon,
 In exile, or in chains, in death itself,
 Still shall I think on, still adore my Vamir :
 But O ! I cannot bear to live without thee.

Vam. It is too much : thy griefs unman my soul.
 What noise was that ? O thou hast staid too long.

S C E N E II.

AMELIA, VAMIR, DUKE of FOIX, Guards.

Duke. I hear his voice ; 'tis he : stay, villain, thou
 Who hast betray'd me.

Vam. I betray'd thee not.
 Now satiate thy revenge, and take my life ;
 Lose not a moment, for the hand of heav'n
 Is rais'd against thee : tremble, slave, thy king

Approaches :

Approaches : thou hast conquer'd none but Vamir :
Thy master comes, take heed.

Duke. He may revenge,
But cannot save thee ; for thy blood—

Ame. O no,
Amelia's guilty : let Amelia die,
And not my Vamir : I deceiv'd thy guards,
And barter'd with them to assist my flight
From hated slav'ry, and a tyrant's pow'r :
Punish my crimes, but O respect a brother,
Respect thyself, thy own unblemish'd fame :
He ne'er betray'd, but loves and wou'd have serv'd thee,
Ev'n when thy rage had doom'd him to destruction.
What crime has he committed ? none, my lord,
None but the crime of loving his Amelia.

Duke. The more thou plead'st for him, the more his
guilt :
Thou art his murth'rer : thou, whose fatal charms
Have poison'd all our happiness, and arm'd
Our hands against each other, may the blood
Of both fall on thee ! now thou weep'st, thy tears
No longer shall deceive me : I must die,
But Vamir first shall perish. Yet I love thee,
Ev'n yet thou may'st escape the fatal blow :
Accept my hand, attend me to the altar,
And seal his pardon there.

Ame. Who, I, my lord ?

Duke. It is enough.

Ame. Shall I be false to Vamir ?

Duke. Stop—Answer me.

Ame. I cannot.

Duke. Let him die.

Vam. Amelia, never let his threats o'ercome
Thy noble faith, but love me well enough
To see me perish : leave me to my fate ;
Now I shall fall triumphant : shou'd'st thou yield,
Vamir must die by his Amelia's hand.

Duke. Guards, drag the traitor to the tow'r : away.

SCENE III.

DUKE, AMELIA.

Ame. And wilt thou make this horrid sacrifice?
Pollute thee with the blood of innocence;
Thou wilt not?

Duke. Yes: to hate thee, and to die,
Is all I wish; to see thee more unhappy,
More wretched than myself, to shed the blood
That's dearest to thee, and to make thy days
As full of woe, as was that fatal hour.
Which hath destroy'd us all. Away, and leave me;
The sight of thee distracts me.

SCENE IV.

DUKE, AMELIA, LISOIS.

Ame. From thy justice,
And that alone, I can expect relief.
Help me to soften this obdurate heart:
Assist me, Lisois:

Duke. If thou listen'st to her,
Thou'rt not my friend.

Ame. I call just heav'n to witness.

Duke. Hence from my sight: I loath thee.

Ame. Tyrant, go,
For I abhor thee; spite of all thy rage,
I thought a woman might at least command
Some cold respect: but love, that softens all,
Hath lost its tender influence o'er thy heart:
I leave thee to thy rage; go, sacrifice
Thy victims, 'midst thy crimes be sure thou count
Amelia's death, and with it count thy own;
For vengeance comes, and in thy punishment
Unites us all; inglorious shalt thou perish,
And unlamented. Die, inhuman savage;

And

And may that hatred, that contempt of thee,
Which now I feel, pursue thy memory,
And after ages execrate thy name !

S C E N E V.

DUKE of FOIX, LISOIS.

Duke. Yes, cruel prophet, I expect the doom
Pronounc'd by thee, that discord's fatal hand
Shall seize on all, and join us in the tomb.

Lis. Rage has o'erpower'd him, and his senses fail.

Duke. What says my friend ? am I to suffer shame
And insult thus ; and shall my haughty rival
Bear off the false, perfidious, dear Amelia ?
Wilt thou bear this, or wait'st thou till the traitor
Shall raise a pow'rful faction to enslave me ?

Lis. Too well I see, my lord, the royal party
Hath spread sedition thro' the multitude,
And shook their faith.

Duke. Vamir lights up the flame :
He has betray'd us all.

Lis. I never meant
To palliate Vamir's crimes, for much I dread
The fatal consequence ; already France
Is arm'd against us. If the people seek
Their safety in rebellion, all is lost :
Danger's on ev'ry side.

Duke. What's to be done ?

Lis. Prevent it : rage and love must be subdu'd ;
Then may we conquer all. We must be firm
And resolute ; avoid or brave the storm :
Do as thou wilt, my hand is ready still
To aid my friend. This morning thou had'st thoughts
Of treating with the king : if thou command'st,
I'll go, my lord, ev'n now, and sue for peace ;
Or if we try the fortune of the day,
The faithful Lisois shall attend thee still :
There, if thou fall'st, thy friend shall not survive thee.

Duke. Alone I will descend into the grave :
 Live thou, to serve my cause, and to revenge me.
 My hour is come, I must fulfil my fate :
 Who wishes but for death, is sure to find it ;
 But mine shou'd come with all his terrors round him ;
 I must have vengeance ; and whene'er I fall,
 Will drag my rival with me to the tomb.

Lif. What horrid thoughts are these !

Duke. In yonder tow'r
 He is confin'd : 'tis under thy command,
 And thou did'st promise, that whene'er—

Lif. Of whom
 Speak'st thou, my lord, a brother ?

Duke. No : a traitor,
 My worst of foes, a rival who abhors me ;
 One who has robb'd me of my dearest treasure :
 The Moor demands his head, and I have promis'd
 To give it him.

Lif. Ha ! promis'd to shake off
 The bonds of nature and humanity !

Duke. Long since they had proscrib'd him.

Lif. And to them,
 Thou yield'st his life ?

Duke. Not to their vengeance only,
 But to my own, which shall be satisfy'd.
 What is the Moor to me, or what my country ?

Lif. To love then you wou'd make the sacrifice,
 And I must be the executioner.

Duke. No : I expect not so much justice from thee ;
 I am a wretch, abandon'd and forlorn,
 Betray'd by love, deserted by my friend ;
 But there are those who yet will keep their promise ;
 Others, perhaps, may serve me, nor alledge
 Such poor excuses for ingratitude.

Lif. I am resolv'd ; and be it guilt or justice,

[After a long silence.]

Ne'er shalt thou say, that Lisois hath betray'd thee :
 Thou art unhappy : Vamir is a traitor.
 It is enough ; I love thee, and consent :
 There is a time for desperate extremes,
 When duties the most sacred must give way

To hard necessity : at such an hour
 I cannot suffer thee to try the faith
 Of any heart but mine : success alone
 Must prove my friendship : soon shalt thou determine
 Whether thy Lisois lov'd thee, and was faithful.

Duke. Once more in sorrow I behold a friend ;
 Deserted by the world, in thee I find
 My only refuge : thou wilt not permit
 A haughty rival to insult my rage,
 To trample on my ashes, and enjoy
 My kingdom in the arms of my Amelia.

Lis. I will not ; but in recompence for this,
 I must demand another sacrifice.

Duke. What is it ? speak.

Lis. I cannot bear the Moor,
 Our insolent protector ; cannot bear
 To see him lord it o'er thy noble subjects.
 I wou'd not serve a tyrant, nor submit
 To shameful slav'ry for a poor support
 We do not want ; 'tis in our pow'r at least
 To die without him : leave to me, my lord,
 The conduct of this day, perhaps my service
 May claim it of thee : Lisois and the Moor
 Wou'd ne'er agree : I must command alone,
 To the last hour.

Duke. Thou shalt : I'll give thee all.
 Thou can'st desire, let but Amelia feel
 Despair like mine, and weep in tears of blood
 Her treach'rous lover : let me hear her groans
 In my last moments to delight my soul ;
 And for the rest, 'tis equal all : to thee
 I trust my glory ; go, dispose, command,
 Prepare thee for the field. I hope not now
 For vict'ry, nor for honourable death ;
 For what is honour to a heart like mine,
 Sunk in despair ! O, be the sad remembrance
 Of a false mistress, and a cruel rival,
 Bury'd with me in everlasting silence !

Lis. Eternal night, if possible, shou'd hide
 Such dreadful deeds : wou'd death had clos'd our eyes
 Before

Before this day of horrors ; but I go
To keep my word, and save my friend. Farewel.



ACT V. SCENE I.

DUKE of FOIX, an Officer.

Duke. Perpetual mis'ry ! am I doom'd to see
Nothing but faction, treason, and revolt ?
Where are the rebels, do they mutiny ?

Offic. At sight of you, my lord, the croud dispers'd.

Duke. On ev'ry side I am oppress'd by Vamir ;
All hearts are his ; my mis'ries are complete,
But what hath Lisois done ?

Offic. His watchful courage
Defends our ramparts 'gainst the foe.

Duke. That soldier
You brought to me in secret, has he done
What I commanded ?

Offic. Yes, my lord : ere now
He's at the tow'r.

Duke. 'Tis well : a common arm
Will do it best, and execute my vengeance
Without remorse : Lisois' uncertain heart
Was not to be depended on ; methought
He look'd with too much coolness on my rage ;
We seldom try to mitigate a grief,
Which we condemn : to other hands I'll trust
My great revenge.—Go thou, and fetch my standard,
Let it be brought upon the ramparts to me :
New dangers press, and for the field again
We must prepare : let the same zeal inspire thee,
And the same courage, imitate thy master,
And learn of him—to die, [Exit Officer.
Ere this 'tis done.

A base ungrateful woman dips my hands
In brother's blood, and leads me to the tomb :

A guilty

A guilty murth'rer, ha! what means my heart?
 I've nourish'd vengeance long; and shall I not
 Enjoy it now? I tremble: and a voice,
 Solemn and sad, cries from my inmost soul,
 Stop, Foix, he is thy brother, hapless prince,
 Call back the murth'rer: Vamir was thy friend.
 O sweet remembrance of our infant years,
 When in the days of innocence our hearts
 Spoke nature's language, and imparted free
 Our mutual wishes! O, how oft has Vamir
 Partook my griefs, and with a brother's hand
 Wiped off the falling tears! and shall I now
 Destroy him? O thou fatal passion, where,
 Where hast thou led me? sure I was not born
 This savage, this barbarian: Vamir yet
 Was guilty; Vamir robb'd me of my life,
 In my Amelia: still I am unjust;
 He lov'd; was that a crime to merit death?
 Alas! nor time, nor war, nor absence, cool'd
 Their faithful passion; still their guiltless flame
 In purest lustre shone, before my heart
 Was poison'd by the cruel draught of love:
 But Vamir braves my wrath, and is my foe;
 Deceives me, hates me; yet he is my brother:
 He shou'd have liv'd, he was belov'd, and happy,
 And only I shou'd perish: I will die
 But, as I liv'd, with honour. Pity melts me,
 Nature determines, and I will forgive him.
 'Tis time—

S C E N E II.

DUKE of FOIX, an Officer.

Duke. Prevent a parricide: away,
 Hasten to the tow'r, reverse my orders; go,
 And let my brother——

Offic. O my lord——

Duke. What say'st thou!
 Run, fly, obey me.

Offic.

Offic. Near the gate this moment
I saw a body cover'd o'er with blood,
Carry'd in secret forth by Lisois' orders,
And much I fear——

Duke. O heav'n ! my brother's dead
And I yet live : earth hath not swallow'd me,
Nor light'ning blasted a base murderer,
Foe to his country, an unnat'ral brother,
How love has chang'd me ! what a load of guilt
Have I to answer for ! the veil's remov'd ;
And now, alas ! I know myself too well ;
I cannot be more guilty : O my brother !
I feel I lov'd thee, yet I slew thee, Vamir.

Offic. Amelia comes, my Lord, and begs to speak
In private with you.

Duke. O ! I must not see her,
Not for the world : I cannot bear it : no,
She will revenge the murder in my blood :
But let her come : I tremble to behold her.

S C E N E III.

DUKE of FOIX, AMELIA, THAIS.

Ame. My lord, you have prevail'd : and since that
(How can I call it by another name) [hatred
Which hath so long pursued me, now requires
A brother's blood, or his Amelia's hand,
Take it : the choice is made, and I am thine :
Remember, I'm the purchase of thy guilt :
Loosen his chains, and set my Vamir free,
That I no more may tremble for his life,
And I will give thee all, yield up my hopes
Of happiness with him, and follow thee,
Ev'n to the altar ; there the hand that gives
My faith away shall punish all my weakness.
Know, at the temple, where thy bridal vows——
But thou desir'st my hand, and that alone
I have to give thee : ha ! thou'rt silent : say,
Is Vamir, is thy brother freed already ?

Duke.

Duke. My brother !

Ame. Gracious heav'n—remove my fears,
Thy eyes are bath'd in tears.

Duke. Thou ask'st his life.

Ame. What do I hear ? didst thou not promise me——

Duke. It is too late.

Ame. Too late ! O Vamir !

Duke. Yes,

It is indeed : wou'd it were not, Amelia ;
The cruel Lisois has obey'd my orders
Too faithfully : O live, to punish me ;
Pierce this inhuman, this unnat'ral heart,
That lov'd thee but too well : I kill'd my brother,,
But for thy sake : revenge on me the crimes
Which but for thee I never had committed.

Ame. Vamir is dead, barbarian ! [*Falling into the arms*

Duke. And thy hand [*of* Thais.

Shall shed the murth'rer's blood.

Ame. And is he gone ? [*Fainting.*

My Vamir——

Duke. Thy reproaches——

Ame. Spare me, spare me,

I'll not reproach thee ; take thy sorrows hence,
And thy repentance : let me but embrace him,
And die.

Duke. Amelia, thou hast too much cause
To grieve, but O for pity take this life
That's hateful to me ; but I've not deserv'd
To perish by thy hand ; but thou shalt guide——

SCENE IV.

DUKE, AMELIA, LISOIS.

Lif. What wou'd thy rashness do ? [*They disarm him.*

Duke. An act of justice :
Punish myself.

Ame. Wert thou his vile accomplice ?

Duke. Thou minister of guilt, thou hast obey'd me.

Lif.

Lif. I promis'd you, my Lord, and I have done
But what I ought.

Duke. Thy stubborn virtue oft
Hath check'd my follies, and oppos'd my weakness;
But when I bade thee be a murderer,
And kill my brother, then thou wert obedient.

Lif. When I refus'd but now to execute
The bloody office, did'st thou not employ
Another hand?

Duke. Love, pow'rful love, that chain'd
My reason down, and sway'd my foolish heart,
Love pleads for me; but thou whose wisdom calms
Each rising passion, whose unalter'd soul,
Firm and unshaken, I so oft have fear'd,
So oft respected, that thou, thus unmov'd,
Shou'd'st suffer such a deed of horror;
'Tis terrible!

Lif. Since sorrow and repentance,
Virtue's best monitors, have pierc'd thy soul
With just remorse: since, spite of all thy rashness,
To save a brother's blood thou gladly now
Wou'd'st give thy own; ye both shall find a friend.
Keep thou thy penitence.

[To the Duke.

Dry up thy tears.

[To Amelia.

This is a day of triumph. Prince, come forth:

Embrace thy brother.

[The scene opens, and discovers Vamir.

Ame. O my Vamir!

Duke. Ha!

My brother!

Ame. Gracious heaven!

Duke. Can it be?

Again I see, again embrace my brother.

O thy forgiveness makes my crime still greater.

Ame. O noble Lisois, thou hast giv'n me life.

Duke. Life to us all.

Lif. A base assassin rais'd

His arm 'gainst Vamir, but I sell'd the traitor,
And laid him breathless at my feet, then feign'd
That I had shed thy brother's blood: I knew
Thou wou'd'st repent, and wish the deed undone.

Duke.

Duke. This was a service I can ne'er reward,
But by endeavouring to be worthy of it:
My crime sits heavy on me, and my eyes,
Fix'd on the earth, dare not look up to Vamir,
And to the wrong'd Amelia.

Vam. We wou'd both
Have serv'd thee with our royal master; both
Are still devoted to thee. What, my brother,
Is thy design? O speak.

Duke. To do you justice:
To expiate, by the greatest punishment,
The greatest crime that love and fierce resentment
Cou'd e'er commit: long I ador'd Amelia:
Ev'n when I gave her Vamir up to death,
I lov'd Amelia: I adore her still,
Nay more than ever, yet I yield her to thee,
And sacrifice my heart to make you blest.
Take her, be happy, and forgive thy brother.

Vam. Behold me at thy feet, with gratitude
Warm as thy bounty, as thy love sincere.

Ame. Permit me to embrace thy knees with Vamir,
Accept our tend'rest friendship, for thy goodness
Has amply paid for all my suff'rings past.

Duke. No more of this, it doubles my misfortunes,
And shews me but what happiness I've lost:
But I will learn from you to follow virtue,
My heart is yours: I'm now indeed thy brother,
By thy example I will love my country.
Let us away, and to the king relate
My crimes, my sorrows, and thy happiness:
Let Vamir's zeal and Vamir's truth be mine,
Faithful to France, to friendship, and to thee;
Foix shall deserve your pardon and your praise;
Ye shall forget his follies and his crimes,
And henceforth know him only by his virtues.

END of the FIFTH and LAST ACT



A

L E T T E R

T O

Her Most Serene HIGHNESS

T H E

DUCHESS OF MAINE.

MADAM,
YOU have seen that noble age, which is at once the model and the reproach of the present, and will be so of future generations, and have yourself made a part of its glory, by your taste, and by your example: those illustrious times, when your ancestors, the *Condés*, crowned with laurels, cultivated the polite arts; when a *Bossuet* immortalised heroes, and instructed kings; when a *Fenelon*, the second of mankind in eloquence, and the first in the art of making virtue amiable, taught justice and humanity in the most charming manner; when *Racine* and *Boileau* presided over the *Belles Lettres*, *Lully* over music, and *le Brun* over painting; all these arts, Madam, met together in your palace: there I
had

had first the happiness, a circumstance which I shall never forget, of hearing, though I was then but a child, that excellent scholar, whose profound learning never obscured the brightness of his genius, cultivating the fine understanding of the *Duke of Bourgogne*, the *Duke of Main*, and yourself: that happy labour, in which he was so powerfully assisted by nature. Sometimes he would take up a *Sophocles* or *Euripides* before you, and translate off-hand one of their tragedies. The admiration and enthusiasm that possessed his soul, on reading those noble performances, inspired him with expressions that answered the manly and harmonious energy of the *Greek*, as nearly as it was possible to reach it in the prose of a language just emerging from barbarism, and which, polished as it now is by so many fine authors, is still, notwithstanding, very deficient in point of force, copiousness, and precision. It is impossible to convey through any modern language all the power of *Greek* expressions; they describe with one stroke, what costs us a whole sentence. A single word was sufficient for them to express a mountain covered over with trees, bending beneath the weight of their leaves; or a god throwing his darts at a vast distance; or, the tops of rocks struck with repeated thunderbolts. That language had not only the advantage of filling the imagination with a word, but every word, we know, had its peculiar melody, which charmed the ear at the same time that it display'd the finest pictures to the mind; and all our translations for this reason from the *Greek* poets are weak, dry, and poor: it is imitating palaces of porphyry with bricks and pebbles. Mr. *de Malefieu* notwithstanding, by the efforts of a sudden enthusiasm, and a vehement forcible manner
of

of reciting, seemed to make up for the poverty of our language, and infuse into his declamation the very soul and spirit of the great Athenians. Permit me, Madam, to give you his thoughts with regard to this inventive, ingenious, and sensible people, a people from whom the Romans, their conquerors, learned every thing, and who, a long time after the fall of both their empires, had yet the power to raise modern Europe from ignorance and barbarism.

He knew more of Athens than many of our travellers in these days do of Rome, after they have seen it over and over. That vast quantity of statues, by the greatest masters; those pillars which adorned the public market-places; those monuments of taste and grandeur; that superb and immense theatre, built in the finest situation, between the town and the citadel, where the works of *Sophocles* and *Euripides* were heard by *Pericles* and *Socrates*; and the youth of Athens attended, not standing up, or in perpetual riot and confusion, as they do with us: in a word, every thing which the Athenians had done in every art and every branch of knowledge, was ever present to the mind of Mr. de Malefieu. He was far from falling in with the opinions of those ridiculously rigid critics, and false politicians, who blame the Athenians for having been too sumptuous in their public entertainments, and do not know that this very magnificence greatly enriched Athens, by attracting crouds of foreigners, who came from all parts to admire, and to receive lessons from them on eloquence and virtue.

This extensive and almost universal genius was engaged by you, Madam, to translate the *Iphigenia* in the *Tauris* of *Euripides*; a task which
he

executed with equal elegance, strength, and fidelity. It was represented at an entertainment which he had the honour to present to your Highness, an entertainment worthy of him who gave, and of her who received it. You, I remember, Madam, play'd the part of *Iphigenia*, for I was present at the representation; and as at that time I had no acquaintance with the French stage, it never enter'd into my head that gallantry could ever have been mingled with so tragical a subject. I gave myself up to the manners and customs of Greece, perhaps the more easily, because I was then acquainted with no other. I admired the *antique* in all its noble simplicity; it was this which first suggested to me the idea of writing my tragedy of *Oedipus*, without ever having read *Corneille's*. I begun, as an essay of my abilities, by translating that famous scene from *Sophocles*, of the double confidence of *Jocasta* and *Oedipus*. I read it to some of my friends, who frequented the theatre, and to two or three actors: they assur'd me it would never succeed on the French stage, and advis'd me to read *Corneille*, who had carefully avoided that part of the plot, and all agreed, that if I did not follow this example, by putting in a love intrigue, the players would never undertake it. I then read the *Oedipus* of *Corneille*, which, though it was not rank'd with *Cinna* and *Polyeucte*, had, notwithstanding, met with some applause. I must confess, their opinions ran directly counter to mine, from the beginning of this affair to the end; but I was forc'd to submit to example, and the evil power of fashion. In the midst of all the terror of this master-piece of antiquity, I brought in, not absolutely a love intrigue, but the

the * remembrance of an extinguish'd passion, which appear'd to the last degree absurd; but I will not repeat here what I have already said on this subject.

Your highness may remember, I had the honour of reading my *Oedipus* to you; the scene from *Sophocles* was not condemn'd at that tribunal; for both yourself, the cardinal *de Polignac*, Mr. *de Malefieu*, and your whole court, unanimously condemn'd me, and with great reason, for having so much as mention'd the word love in a work which *Sophocles* finish'd so completely, and so successfully, without that unhappy foreign ornament; and yet the very fault which you blamed me for, was the only thing that recommended my performance to the stage. The players were, with the greatest difficulty, prevail'd on to perform my *Oedipus*, which they imagin'd could never succeed: the public, however, were intirely of your opinion; every part of it that was written in the taste of *Sophocles* was generally applauded, and the love scenes condemn'd by the most judicious critics: to say the truth, Madam, whilst parricide and incest are destroying a family, and a plague laying the whole country waste, is it a season for love and gallantry? There cannot, perhaps, be two more striking proofs of theatrical absurdity, and the power of habit, than *Corneille*, on one side, making *Theseus* cry out,

† Quelque ravage affreux qu'etale ici la peste,
L'absence aux vrais amans est encore plus funeste.

* Voltaire here alludes to the part of *Philoctetes* in his *Oedipus*. See the play, and the preface to it, in the first Vol. of the Dramatic works.

† The literal translation of which is "whatever dreadful havoc
" the plague may make here, absence to those who truly love is
" much

And, on the other, myself, sixty years after him, making old *Jocasta* talk of her old love; and all this only in compliance with a taste the most false and ridiculous that ever corrupted literature.

That a *Phædra*, whose character is, perhaps, the most truly theatrical that ever was exhibited, and almost the only person whom antiquity hath represented in love, that she shou'd express all the power and fury of that fatal passion: that a *Roxana*, confin'd within the walls of an idle seraglio, should abandon herself to love and jealousy: that *Ariadne* should complain to heaven and earth of cruelty and inconstancy: that *Orosmanes* should destroy a mistress whom he ador'd: all this is truly tragic: love, either raging, or criminal, or unhappy, or attended with remorse, draws such tears from us as we need not blush to shed; but there is no medium: love should either command as a tyrant, or not appear at all; he can never act an under-part: but that *Nero* should hide himself behind the tapestry to overhear the conversation of his mistress and his rival: that old *Mithridates* should make use of a comedy trick to discover the secret of a young woman belov'd by his two sons: that *Maximus*, even in *Cinna*, a piece of so much real merit, should act the part of a villain, and discover so important a conspiracy, only because he was weak enough to be in love with a woman whose passion for *Cinna* he must have known, and alledge by way of reason, that

* Love

“ much more dreadful.” There is a great deal of such nonsense in Dryden's and some other of our tragedies, but it wou'd not go down in the present age.

* Love excuses all,
For the true lover knows no friends——

that old *Sertorius* should fall in love with a strange Spanish lady, called *Viriate*, and be assassinated by his rival *Perpenna*; all this, we will be bold enough to assert, is little, mean, and puerile: such ridiculous stuff would degrade us infinitely below the Athenians, if our great masters had not made amends for these faults, which are merely national, by those sublime beauties which are intirely the product of their own genius.

It is indeed astonishing to me, that the great tragic poets of Athens should dwell so much on those subjects where nature displays every thing that is great and affecting; an *Electra*, an *Iphigenia*, a *Merope*, an *Alcmeon*: and that our illustrious moderns, neglecting all these, should scarce treat of any thing but love, which is generally much more proper for comedy than tregedy: sometimes indeed they have endeavour'd to enrich and adorn it by politics; but that love which is not violent is always cold, and all political intrigues that do not rise to the height and fury of ambition, are still more cold and insipid: political reasonings and debates are very agreeable in *Polybius* or *Machiavel*; gallantry is very fit for tales, or comedies; but nothing like this is suitable to the grandeur and pathos of true tragedy.

A taste for gallantry in our tragedies was carri'd to such a ridiculous excess, that a great princess, whose high rank and fine understanding might in some measure excuse her believing that all the world would be of her opinion,

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imagin'd,

* The Original is,

“ l'amour rend tout permis,

“ Un veritable amant ne connoit point d'amis.”

imagin'd, that the parting of *Titus* and *Berenice* was an excellent subject for a tragedy: she therefore put it into the hands of || two of our best writers; neither of them had ever produc'd a performance wherein love had not play'd the principal or at least the second part; but one of them had never touch'd the heart, except in those scenes of the *Cid* which he had taken from the Spanish: the other, always tender and elegant, endow'd with every species of eloquence, and above all, master of that enchanting art which draws forth the most delicate sentiments from the least and most unpromising incidents: one therefore made of *Titus* and *Berenice* as contemptible a piece as ever appear'd on the stage; the other found out the secret of interesting the spectator for five acts without any other foundation but these words, *I love you, and I leave you*. It was indeed nothing more than a pastoral, between an emperor, a king, and a queen; and a pastoral withal infinitely less tragical than the interesting scenes of *Pastor Fido*. The success of this, however, persuaded the public, and the poets, that love, and love alone, was the soul of tragedy.

It was not till long after, when he was further advanced in life, that this great poet found out that he was capable of something superior to this: when he was sorry he had enervated the drama by so many declarations of love, and sentiments of jealousy, and coquetry, much worthier, as I have already ventur'd to assert, of Menander, than of Sophocles and Euripides. Then he wrote his master-

|| The French expression is "deux maitres de la scene, i. e. "two masters of the scene." Corneille and Racine, the latter of whom Voltaire takes every occasion of preferring to the former, though he frequently censures both with great freedom, and generally with equal justice.

ter-piece, Athaliah ; but though he was undeceiv'd himself, the public was *not*: they could not bring themselves to conceive that a woman, a child, and a priest, could make an interesting tragedy : a work that approach'd nearer to perfection than any which ever came from the hand of man, remain'd for a long time in contempt, and its illustrious author had to his last hour the mortification of seeing the age he liv'd in, tho' greatly improv'd, still so corrupted with bad taste, as never to do justice to his noblest performance.

It is certain, if this great man had liv'd, and cultivated those talents which alone made his fortune and his fame, and which therefore he should not have deserted, he would have restor'd to the theatre its antient purity, and no more have degraded the great subjects of antiquity with love intrigue. He had begun an *Iphigenia in Tauris*, and there was not a word of gallantry in his whole plan : he wou'd never have made *Agamemnon*, *Orestes*, *Electra*, *Telephus*, or *Ajax*, in love : but having unhappily quitted the stage before he had reform'd it, all those who followed him imitated, and even added to his faults, without copying any of his beauties. The morality of *Quinault's* operas was brought into almost every tragic scene : sometimes it is in *Alcibiades* who assures us, that in those tender moments he has always prov'd by experience, that a mortal may taste of perfect happiness : sometimes it is an *Amestris*, who tells us, that the daughter of a great king burns with a secret flame without shame, and without fear : in another, *Agonius* follows the steps of the fair *Crisis* in every place the constant adorer of her divine charms ; the fierce *Arminius*, the defender of Germany, protests to us, that he comes to read his fate in the eyes of *Ismenia*, and goes to the camp of *Varus*, to see if—the fair

eyes of his *Ismenia* will shew him their wonted tenderness.—In *Amasis*, which is only *Merope*, crouded with a heap of romantic episodes, the heroine, who, three days before, at a country-house, had just got sight of a young stranger, and fallen in love with him, cries out, with a great deal of regard to decency and decorum,—*This is the same stranger, alas! he hath not conceal'd himself so much as he ought, for my repose: for the few moments when he chanc'd to strike my eyes I saw him and blush'd, my soul was deeply mov'd at him.* In *Athenais*, a prince of Persia disguises himself, in order to make his mistress a visit at the court of a Roman emperor: we fancy, in short, that we are reading the romances of Mademoiselle Scuderi, who describ'd the citizens of Paris under the names of the heroes of antiquity.

To confirm and establish this horrid taste amongst us, which renders us so ridiculous in the eyes of all sensible foreigners, it unfortunately happen'd, that Mr. *de Longepierre*, a warm admirer of antiquity, but not sufficiently acquainted with our stage, and who besides was careless in his versification, gave us his *Electra*. We must confess it was written in the taste of the antients, no cold ill-placed intrigue disfigur'd this subject full of terror: the piece was simple, and without any episode. This procured for it, and with great reason, the patronage of so many persons of the first consideration, who flatter'd themselves that this valuable simplicity, which constituted the principal merit of the great geniusses of Athens, would be well received at Paris, where it had been so long neglected. You, Madam, with the late princefs of *Conti*, were at the head of those sanguine friends; but, unhappily, the faults of the French piece were so numerous, in comparison with

with the beauties which he had borrow'd from the Greek, that you yourself acknowledg'd, at the representation, it was a statue of *Praxiteles* disfigured by a modern artist. You had resolution enough to give up a thing which was not in reality worthy of being supported, well knowing, that favour and protection thrown away on bad performances, is as prejudicial to the advancement of wit and good sense, as the unjust censure of real merit; but the downfall of *Electra* was a terrible stroke on the partisans of antiquity. The critics avail'd themselves of the faults of the copy, the better to decry the merit of the original; and to complete the corruption of our taste, we persuaded ourselves it was impossible to support, without love and romance, those subjects which the Greeks had never debased by such episodes: it was pretended that we might admire the Greek tragedians in the reading, but that it was impossible to imitate them without being condemn'd by our own age and nation: strange contradiction! for, surely, if the reading really pleas'd us, how could the representation displease?

We shou'd not, I acknowledge, endeavour to imitate what is weak and defective in the antients: it is most probable that their faults were very well known to their cotemporaries. I am satisfy'd, Madam, that the wits of Athens condemn'd, as well as you, some of those repetitions, and some declamations with which *Sophocles* has loaded his *Electra*: they must have observ'd, that he had not dived deep enough, into the human heart. I will moreover fairly confess, that there are beauties peculiar not only to the Greek language, but to the climate, to manners and times, which it would be ridiculous to transplant hither. I have not copy'd exactly therefore the *Electra* of *Sophocles*; much

more I knew would be necessary : but I have taken, as well as I could, all the spirit and substance of it. The feast celebrated by *Ægisthus* and *Clytemnæstra*, which they call'd the feast of *Agamemnon* ; the arrival of *Orestes* and *Pylades* ; the urn which was suppos'd to contain the ashes of *Orestes* ; the ring of *Agamemnon* ; the character of *Electra*, and that of *Iphisa*, which is exactly the *Chrysothemis* of *Sophocles* ; and, above all, the remorse of *Clytemnæstra* ; these I have copy'd from the Greek tragedy. When the messenger, who relates the fictitious story of the death of *Orestes*, says to *Clytemnæstra*, “ *I see, Madam, you are deeply affected at his death ;*” she replies, “ *I am a mother, and must therefore be unhappy ; a mother, though injur'd, cannot hate her own offspring :*” she even endeavours to justify herself to *Electra*, with regard to the murder of *Agamemnon*, and laments her daughter. *Euripides* has carry'd *Clytemnæstra's* repentance still farther. This, Madam, was what gain'd the applause of the most judicious and sensible people upon earth, and was approv'd by all good judges in our own nation. No character, in reality, can be more natural than that of a woman, criminal with regard to her husband, yet soften'd by her children ; a woman, whose proud and fiery disposition is still open to pity and compassion, who resumes the fierceness of her character on receiving too severe reproaches, and at last sinks into submission and tears. The seeds of this character were in *Sophocles* and *Euripides*, and I have only unfolded them. Nothing but ignorance, and its natural attendant, presumption, can assert, that the antients have nothing worthy of our imitation : there is scarce one real and essential beauty and perfection, for the

the foundation of which, at least, we are not indebted to them.

I have taken particular care not to depart from that simplicity so strongly recommended by the Greeks, and so difficult to attain, the true mark of genius and invention; and the very essence of all theatrical merit. A foreign character, brought into *Oedipus* or *Electra*, who should play a principal part, and draw aside the attention of the audience, would be a monster in the eyes of all those, who have any knowledge of the antients, or of that nature which they have so finely painted. Art and genius consist in finding every thing within the subject, and never going out of it in search of additional ornaments: but how are we to imitate that truly tragic pomp and magnificence which we find in the verses of Sophocles, that natural elegance and purity of diction, without which the piece, how well soever conducted in other respects, must after all be but a poor performance!

I have at least given my countrymen some idea of a tragedy without love, without confidants, and without episodes: the few partisans of good taste acknowledge themselves oblig'd to me for it, tho' the rest of the world withhold their approbation for a time, but will come in at last, when the rage of party is over, the injustice of persecution at an end, and the clouds of ignorance dissipated. You, Madam, must preserve amongst us those glittering sparks of light which the antients have transmitted to us: we owe every thing to them: not an art was born amongst us; every thing was transplanted: but the earth that bears these foreign fruits is worn out, and our antient barbarism, by the help of false taste, would break out again in spite of all our culture and improvement: and

the disciples of Athens and Rome become Goths and Vandals, corrupted with the manners of the Sibarites, without the kind favour and protection of persons of your rank. When nature hath given them either genius, or the love of genius, they encourage this nation, which is better able to imitate than to invent; and which always looks up towards the great for those instructions and examples which it perpetually stands in need of. All that I wish for, Madam, is, that some genius may be found to finish what I have but just sketch'd out; to free the stage from that effeminacy and affectation which it is now sunk into; to render it respectable to the gravest characters; worthy of the few great master-pieces which we already have amongst us; worthy, in short, the approbation of a mind like yours, and all those who may hereafter endeavour to resemble you.



ORESTES,

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ORESTES, Son of Agamemnon and Clytem-
næstra.

ELECTRA, } Sisters of Orestes.
IPHISA, }

CLYTEMNÆSTRA, Wife of Ægisthus.

PYLADES, Friend of Orestes.

PAMMENES, an old Man, attach'd to the Family
of Agamemnon.

DIMAS, an Officer of the Guards.

ATTENDANTS.

SCENE, the sea-shore, a wood, a temple, a
palace and a tomb, on one side: on the other,
Argos at a distance.

ORESTES.



O R E S T E S:

A

T R A G E D Y.

A C T I. S C E N E I.

IPHISA, PAMMENES.

Ipb. **S**ay'st thou, Pammenes, shall these hated walls,
Where I so long have dragg'd a life of woe,
Afford at least the melancholy comfort
Of mingling sorrows with my dear Electra?
And will Ægisthus bring her to the tomb
Of Agamemnon, bring his daughter here,
To be a witness of the horrid pomp,
The sad solemnity, which on this day
Annual returns, to celebrate their crimes,
And make their guilt immortal?

Pam. O Iphisa,
Thou honour'd daughter of my royal master,
Like thee, confin'd within these lonely walls,
The secrets of a vile abandon'd court,
Do seldom reach Pammenes; but 'tis rumour'd,
The jealous tyrant brings Electra here,
Fearful lest Argos, by her cries alarm'd,
Should rise to vengeance; ev'ry heart, he knows,

Feels

Feels for the injur'd princess ; therefore much
He dreads her clamours ; with a watchful eye
Observes her conduct ; treats her as a slave,
And leads the captive to adorn his triumph.

Ipb. Good heav'n ! and must Electra be a slave ?
Shall Agamemnon's blood be thus disgrac'd
By a barbarian ? Will her cruel mother,
Will Clytemnæstra bear the vile reproach
That on herself recoils, and all her race ?
Perhaps my sister is too fierce of soul,
She mingles too much pride and bitterness
Of keen resentment with her griefs ; alas !
Weak are her arms against a tyrant's pow'r :
What will her anger, what her pride avail her ?
They only irritate a haughty foe,
And cannot serve our cause : my fate at least
Is milder, and this solitary state
Shields me from wrongs which must oppress Electra.
Far from my father's foes, these pious hands
Can pay due off'rings to his honour'd shade :
Far from his murth'rer in this sad retreat
Freely I weep in peace, and curse Ægisthus :
I'm not condemn'd to see the tyrant here,
Save when the sun unwillingly brings round
The fatal day that knit the dreadful tie,
When that inhuman monster shed the blood
Of Agamemnon, when base Clytemnæstra——

S C E N E II.

ELECTRA, IPHISA, PAMMENES.

Ipb. O my Electra ! art thou here ? my sister——

Elec. The day of horror is return'd, Iphisa :
The dreadful rites, the guilty feast prepar'd,
Have brought me hither ; thy Electra comes,
Thy captive sister, comes a wretched slave,
To bear the tidings of their guilty joy.

Ipb. To see Electra is a blessing still,
It pours some joy into the bitter cup
Of sorrow, thus to mix my tears with thine.

Elec.

Elec. Tears, my Iphisa! I have shed enough
 Of them already: O thou bleeding ghost
 Of my dead father, ever-honour'd shade,
 Is that the tribute which I owe to thee?
 I owe thee blood, and blood thou hast requir'd:
 Amidst the pomp of this dire festival,
 Dragg'd by Ægisthus here, I will collect
 My scatter'd spirits, shake off these vile chains,
 And be my own avenger: yes, Iphisa,
 This feeble arm shall reach the tyrant's heart:
 Did not the cruel Clytemnæstra shed
 A husband's blood? did I not see her lift
 Her barb'rous hand against him, and shall we
 Suspend the blow, and let a murth'rer live?
 O vengeance, and thou, animating virtue,
 That dost inspire me, art thou not as bold
 As daring guilt? We must revenge ourselves,
 We must, Iphisa: fear'st thou then to strike,
 Fear'st thou to die? shall Clytemnæstra's daughter,
 The blood of Atreus fear? O rather lend
 Thy aid, and join the desp'rate Electra.

Ipb. My dearest sister, moderate thy rage,
 And calm thy troubled mind: against our foes
 What can we bring but unavailing tears?
 Who will assist us? Who will lend us arms?
 Or how shall we surprise a watchful king,
 For guilt is ever fearful, by his guards
 Surrounded? Why, Electra, wilt thou court
 Perpetual danger? Shou'd the tyrant hear
 Thy loud complaints, I tremble for thy life.

Elec. Why let him hear them: I wou'd have my grief
 Sink to his heart, and poison all his joys:
 Yes; I wou'd have my cries ascend to heav'n,
 And bring the thunder down; wou'd have them raise
 A hundred kings, who never yet have dar'd,
 Unworthy cowards as they are, t'avenge
 Great Agamemnon: but I pardon thee,
 And the vain terrors of thy fearful soul,
 That shrinks at danger; for he favours you,
 I know he does, and only crushes me
 Beneath his iron yoke: thou hast not been,

Like

Like me, a wretched, persecuted slave;
 Thou did'st not see the impious parricide,
 The horrid * feast, the dire solemnity,
 When Clytemnæstra—O the dreadful image
 Is still before me; in this place, Iphisa,
 Where now thou tremblest to declare thy wrongs,
 There did these eyes behold our hapless father
 Caught in the deadly snare: Pammenes heard
 His dying groans, and ran with me to save him:
 But when I came, what did I see! my mother
 Plunging her ruthless dagger in his breast,
 To rob him of the poor remains of life.

[Turning to Pammenes.]

Thou saw'st me take Orestes in my arms,
 My dear Orestes; little knew he then
 Of danger, but, as near his murder'd father
 He stood, call'd out for aid to Clytemnæstra:
 She, midst the horrors of the guilty scene,
 Stopp'd for a moment short, and gave us time
 Safe to convey the victim from Ægisthus.
 Whether the tyrant has compleated yet
 Th' imperfect vengeance in Orestes' blood,
 I know not: O my brother, dost thou live,
 Or hast thou follow'd thy unhappy father?
 Alas! I weep for him, and fear for thee.
 These hands are loaded with inglorious chains,
 And these sad eyes, for ever bath'd in tears,
 See nought but guilt, oppression, and despair.

Pam. Ye dear remains of Atreus' honour'd race,
 Whose splendor I have seen, who's woes I feel,
 Permit a friend to fill your weeping souls
 With chearful hope, that ever waits propitious
 To sooth affliction: call to mind what heav'n
 Long since hath promis'd, that its vengeful hand

Shou'd

* Nothing could add more to the horror of the crime than such a circumstance. Clytemnæstra, not content with murdering her husband, instituted a solemn feast in commemoration of the happy event, and call'd it, with cruel raillery, the supper of Agamemnon. Dinias, in his history of Argos, informs us, it was on the 13th of the month Gamelion, which answers to the beginning of our January.

Shou'd one day lead Orestes to the place
 Where we preserv'd him ; that Ægisthus there,
 Ev'n at yon tomb, and on the fatal day
 Mark'd for his impious triumph o'er the dead,
 Shou'd pay the forfeit of his crime : the Gods
 Can ne'er deceive ; in darkness still they veil
 Their secret purpose from the eyes of men,
 And punishment, with slow but certain steps,
 Still follows guilt.

Iph. But wherefore stays so long
 Their tardy vengeance ? I have languish'd here
 In grief and anguish many a tedious hour ;
 Electra, still more wretched, is in chains :
 Mean time the proud oppressor lives in peace,
 And glories in his crimes.

Elec. Thou seest, Pammenes,
 Ægisthus still renews his cruel triumph,
 And celebrates the fatal nuptials ; still
 A wretched exile lives my dear Orestes,
 Forgetful of his father, and Electra.

Pam. But mark the course of time : he touches now
 The age when manly strength, with courage join'd,
 May aid your purpose ; hope for his return,
 And trust on heav'n.

Elec. We will : thou son of wisdom,
 Thou good old man, O thou hast darted forth
 A ray of hope on my despairing soul.
 If with unpitying eye the gods beheld
 Our mis'ries here, and proud oppression, still
 Unpunish'd, trampled on the tender feet
 Of innocence, what hand wou'd crown their altars
 With incense and oblation ! but kind heav'n
 Will give Orestes to a sister's tears,
 And blast the tyrant : hear my voice, Orestes,
 O hear thy country's, hear the cries of blood,
 That call thee forth ; come from thy dreary caves,
 And pathless deserts, where misfortune long
 Hath try'd thy courage ; leave thy savage prey,
 And all the roaming monsters of the forest,
 To chase the beasts of Argos, to destroy,
 The tyrants of the earth, the murderers

Of kings ; O haste, and let me guide thy hand
Ev'n to the traitor's breast.

Ipb. No more : repress

Thy griefs, *Electra* ; see thy mother comes.

Elec. And have I yet a mother ?

S C E N E III.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA, IPHISA.

Clyt. Hence, and leave me ;

You may retire, *Pammenes* ; stay, my daughters.

Ipb. Alas ! that sacred name dispels my fears.

Elec. And doubles mine.

Clyt. Touching your fate, my children,
I come to lay a mother's heart before you.
Barren, thank heav'n, hath been my second bed,
Nor brought a race of jealous foes to sow
Division here. Alas ! my little race
Is almost run ; the secret grief that long
Hath prey'd on my sad heart will finish soon
A life of woe : spite of *Ægisthus*, still
I love my children ; spite of all his rage,
Electra, thou who in thy infant years
So oft hast giv'n me comfort, when the loss
Of *Iphigenia*, and her cruel father
Oppress'd my soul ; tho' now thy pride disdains me,
And braves my pow'r, thou art my daughter still ;
Unworthy as thou art, there's still a place
In *Clytemnæstra's* heart for her *Electra*.

Elec. For me ! O heav'n, and am I yet belov'd ?
And dost thou feel for thy unhappy daughter ?
O ! if thou dost, behold her chains, behold
Yon tomb——

Clyt. Unkind *Electra*, thus to wake
The sad remembrance ! thou hast plung'd a dagger
Into thy mother's breast : but I deserve it.

Elec. Thou hast disarm'd *Electra*, nature pleads
A mother's cause ; I own myself to blame
For all the bitterness of sorrow pour'd

In dreadful execrations on thy head.
 By thee deliver'd to the tyrant's pow'r,
 I wou'd have torn thee from him; I lament,
 But cannot hate thee. O, if gracious heav'n
 Hath touch'd thy soul with wholesome penitence,
 Obey its sacred will, and hear the voice
 Of conscience, that commands thee to unloose
 The horrid ties that bind thee to a wretch
 Despis'd and hated; follow the great God,
 Who leads thy footsteps to the paths of virtue;
 Call back your son, let him return to fill
 The throne of his great ancestors, to scourge
 A tyrant, to revenge his murther'd father,
 His sisters, and his mother: haste and send
 For my Orestes.

Clyt. Talk no more of that,
 Electra, nor speak thus of my Ægisthus:
 I grieve to see thee in these shameful bonds;
 But know, a sov'reign cannot tamely brook
 Repeated insults, or embrace a foe:
 You had provok'd him to be cruel; I,
 Who am but his first subject, oft have try'd
 To sooth his anger, but in vain; my words,
 Instead of healing, but inflam'd the wound:
 Electra is indebted to herself
 For all her deep-felt inj'ries; henceforth bend
 To thy condition; let thy sister teach thee
 That we must yield submissive to our fate,
 If e'er we hope to change it. I cou'd wish
 To end my days in peace amongst my children;
 But if thy rapid and imprudent zeal
 Should bring Orestes here before the time,
 His life might answer for it, and thy own,
 If the king see him: though I pity thee,
 Electra, yet I owe a husband more
 Than a lost son, whom I have cause to fear

Elec. O heav'n, that monster! He thy husband! He!
 And is it thus thou pity'st me? Alas!
 What will this poor, this light remorse avail thee?
 This fleeting sorrow? Was thy tenderness
 But for a moment? Dost thou threaten me? [*To Iphisa.*

Is this, Iphisa, this a mother's love ?

[To Clytemnæstra.

It seems you threaten my Orestes too ;
You have no cause to fear, nor I to hope
For him : alas ! perhaps he is no more ;
Perhaps, Ægiſthus, the deteſted tyrant,
He, whom but now thou didſt not bluſh to call
Thy huſband, hath, in ſecret ta'en his life.

Ipb. Believe me, Madam, when I call the gods
To witneſs, poor Electra and myſelf
Are ſtrangers to the fate of dear Oreſtes ;
Have pity then on your afflicted daughters,
Pity your hapleſs ſon, and ſpare Electra,
She has been wrong'd ; her tears and her reproaches
Suit well her fate, and ought to be forgiv'n.

Elec. I muſt not hope it, muſt not ev'n complain :
And if Oreſtes lives but in my thoughts
'Tis deem'd a crime. I know Ægiſthus well,
Know his fierce nature ; if he fears my brother,
He'll ſoon deſtroy him.

Clyt. Know, thy brother lives ;
If he's in danger, 'tis from thy imprudence ;
Therefore be humble, moderate thy tranſports,
Reſpect thy mother : think'ſt thou I come here,
Elate with joy, to lead the ſplendid triumph ?
O no, to me it is a day of ſorrow ;
Thou weep'ſt in chains, and I upon a throne.
I know the cruel vows thy hatred made
Againſt me. O Electra ! ceaſe thy pray'rs,
The gods have heard thee but too well already :
Retire, and leave me.

S C E N E IV.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA alone.

How it ſhocks my ſoul
To ſee my children ! O the guilty bed !
My fatal marriage, and long proſp'rous crimes,

Adultery

Adultery and murder, horrid bonds !
 How ye torment me now ! my little dream
 Of happiness is o'er, and conscience darts
 Its sudden rays on my affrighted soul.
 How can Ægisthus live so long in peace !
 Fearless he leads me on to share with him
 These cruel triumphs ; but my spirits fail,
 My strength forsakes me, and I tremble now
 At ev'ry omen ; fear my subjects ; fear
 All Argos, Greece, Electra, and Orestes.
 How dreadful 'tis to hate the blood that flow'd
 Congenial with our own, to dread the names
 Which mortals hold so sacred and so dear !
 But injur'd nature, banish'd from my heart,
 Indignant frowns, and to avenge herself
 Now bids me tremble at the name of son.

S C E N E V.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Clyt. Cruel Ægisthus, wherefore would'st thou lead me
 To this sad place, the seat of death and horror ?

Ægis. Is then the solemn pomp, the feast of joy,
 To sweet remembrance of our prosp'rous days,
 Grown hateful to thee, is our marriage day
 A day of horror ?

Clyt. No : but here, Ægisthus,
 There may be danger : my unhappy children
 Have fill'd this heart with anguish : poor Iphisa
 Weeps her hard lot ; Electra is in chains ;
 This fatal place reminds me of the blood
 We shed, reminds me of my dear Orestes,
 Of Agamemnon.

Ægis. Let Iphisa weep,
 And proud Electra rave ; I bore too long
 Her bitter taunts, 'tis fit her haughtiness
 Shou'd now be humbled ; I'll not suffer her
 To stir up foul rebellion in my kingdom,
 To tell the factious that Orestes comes,

And

And call down vengeance on me ; every hour
That hated name is echo'd in my ear :
I must not bear it.

Clyt. Ha ! what name was that ?
Orestes ! O, I shudder at the thought
Of his approach : an oracle long since
Declar'd, that here, ev'n at the fatal tomb
Whither thou lead'it, his parricidal hand
Shou'd one day rise vindictive, and destroy us.
Why therefore wou'd'st thou tempt the gods, why thus
Expose a life so dear to Clytemnæstra ?

Ægis. Be not alarm'd ; Orestes ne'er shall hurt thee :
His be the danger : for I have sent forth
Some friends in search of him, and soon I hope
Shall see him in the toils ; a wretched exile
From clime to clime he roams, and now it seems
In Epidaurus' gloomy forest hides
His ignominious head ; but there perhaps
We have more friends than Clytemnæstra thinks of ;
The king may serve us.

Clyt. But, my son——

Ægis. I know
He's fierce, implacable, revengeful ; stung
By his misfortunes, all the blood of Atreus
Boils in his breast, and animates his rage.

Clyt. Alas ! my Lord, his rage is but too just.

Ægis. Be it our bus'ness then to make it vain ;
Thou know'st I've sent my Plisthenes in secret
To Epidaurus.

Clyt. But for what ?

Ægis. To fix
My throne in safety, and remove thy fears :
Yes, Plisthenes, my son, by thee adopted
Heir to my kingdom, knows too well how much
His int'rest must depend on the event
E'er to neglect his charge : he is thy son,
Think of no other : had Electra's heart
Submissive yielded to another's counsels,
She had been happy in my Plisthenes :
But she shall feel the power which she contemns,

She

She and her haughty brother, her Orestes,
He may be found perhaps.—You seem disturb'd.

Clyt. Alas! Ægisthus, must we sacrifice
More victims? Must I purchase length of days
With added guilt? Thou know'st whose blood we
And must my son too perish? Must I pay [shed—
So dear a price for life?

Ægif. Remember——

Clyt. No:

First let me ask the sacred oracle——

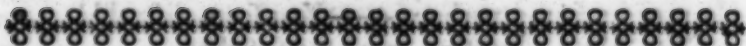
Ægif. What canst thou hope from gods or oracles?
Were they consulted on the blissful day
That gave Ægisthus to his Clytemnæstra?

Clyt. Thou hast recall'd a time when heav'n, I fear,
Was much offended: love defies the gods,
But fear adores them; guilt weighs down my soul,
Do not oppress my feeble spirits; time,
That changes all, hath alter'd this proud heart;
The hand of heav'n is on me, and subdues
The haughty rage that once inspir'd my breast;
Not that my tender friendship for Ægisthus
Can ere decay, our int'rests are the same;
But to behold my daughter made a slave,
To think on my poor lost abandon'd son,
To think that now, ev'n now, perhaps he dies
By vile assassins, or, if living, lives
My foe, and hates the guilty Clytemnæstra,
Is it not dreadful? Pity me, Ægisthus,
I am a mother still.

Ægif. Thou art my wife;
Thou art my queen; resume thy wonted courage,
And be thyself again; indulge no more
This foolish fondness for ungrateful children,
Who merit not thy love; consult alone
Ægisthus' safety, and thy own repose.

Clyt. Repose! The guilty mind can ne'er enjoy it.

END of the FIRST ACT.



A C T II. S C E N E I.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

Ores. **W**HITHER, my Pylades, hath cruel fate
 Conducted us? Alas! Orestes lives
 But to increase the sorrows of his friend :
 Our arms, our treasures, and our soldiers lost
 In the rude storm ; here on this desert coast,
 No succour near, deserted and forlorn
 We wander on, and nought but hope remains.
 Where are we ?

Pyl. That I know not ; but since fate
 Hath led us hither, let us not despair ;
 It is enough for me, Orestes lives :
 Be confident ; the barb'rous Ægisthus
 In vain pursu'd thy life, which heav'n preserv'd
 In Epidaurus, when thy arm subdued
 The gallant Plisthenes : let nought alarm
 Or terrify thy soul, but boldly urge
 Thy way, protected by that guardian God
 Who watches o'er the just, the great avenger,
 Who hath already to thy valour giv'n
 The son, and promis'd that ere long the father
 Shall follow him.

Ores. Alas, my friend, that God
 In anger now withdraws his pow'rful aid,
 And frowns upon us, as thy cruel fate
 Too plainly shews ; a terrible example !

But say, within the rock did'st thou conceal
 The urn, which to Mycenæ, horrid seat
 Of murder, by the god's command, we hear ;
 That urn, which holds the ashes of my foe,
 Of Plisthenes ; with that we must deceive
 The tyrant.

Pyl. I have done it.

Ores. Gracious heav'n !
 When shall we reap the fruits of our obedience ?

When

When will the wish'd-for day of vengeance come?
 Shall I again behold my native soil,
 The dear, the dreadful place where first I saw
 The light of day? Where shall I find my sister,
 The pride, the glory, of admiring Greece;
 That gen'rous maid, whom all unite to praise,
 But none will dare to succour? She preserv'd
 My life; and, worthy of her noble father,
 Hath never bent beneath th' oppressive hand
 Of pow'r, but brav'd the fury of the storm.
 How many kings, how many heroes, fought
 For Menelaus! Agamemnon dies,
 And Greece forgets him, whilst his hapless son,
 Deserted, wanders o'er a faithless world,
 To seek some blest asylum for repose.
 Alas, without thy friendship I had been
 The most distress'd, most abject of mankind:
 But heav'n, in pity to my woes, hath sent
 My Pylades; it wou'd not let me perish,
 But gave me to subdue my hated foe,
 And half revenge my father: say, my friend,
 What path will lead us to the tyrant's court?

Pyl. Behold that palace, and the tow'ring height
 Of yon proud temple, the dark grove o'ergrown
 With cypress, and the tomb, rich images
 Of mournful splendor all: and see! this way
 Advancing, comes a venerable sage,
 Of mildest aspect, and whose years, no doubt,
 Have long experience of calamity;
 His soul will melt at thy disastrous fate.

Ores. Is ev'ry mortal born to suffer? hark!
 He groans, my Pylades.

S C E N E II.

ORESTES, PYLADES, PAMMENES.

Pyl. Whoe'er thou art,
 Stop, and inform us: we are strangers here.
 Two poor unhappy friends, long time the sport
 Of winds and waves, now on this unknown shore

Cast

Cast helpless, can'st thou tell us if this place
Will be or fatal to us, or propitious?

Pam. I am a simple, plain, old man, and here
Worship the gods, adore their justice, live
In humble fear of them, and exercise
The sacred rights of hospitality;
Ye both are welcome to my little cottage,
There to despise with me the pride of kings,
Their pomp and riches: come, my friends, for such
I ever hold the wretched.

Oref. Gen'rous stranger!
May gracious heav'n inspire us with the means
To recompence thy goodness! but inform us
What place is this; who is your king?

Pam. Ægisthus:
I am his subject.

Oref. Terrors, crimes, and vengeance!
O heav'n, Ægisthus!

Ply. Soft: do not betray us;
Be careful.

Oref. Gods! Ægisthus! He who murther'd——

Pam. The same.

Oref. And Clytemnæstra, lives she still
After that fatal blow?

Pam. She reigns with him;
The rest is known too well.

Oref. That tomb before us,
And yonder palace——

Pam. Is inhabited
Now by Ægisthus; built, I well remember,
By worthier hands, and for a better use.
The tomb thou see'st, forgive me if I weep
At the remembrance, is the tomb of him
I lov'd, my lord, my king—of Agamemnon.

Oref. O 'tis too much! I sink beneath it.

Pyl. Hide
Thy tears, my friend.

[*To Orestes, who turns away from him.*]

Pam. You seem much mov'd, and fain
Wou'd stop the tide of grief: O give it way,
Indulge thy sorrows, and lament the son

Of gods, the noble conqueror of Troy ;
 Whilst they insult his sacred mem'ry here,
 Strangers shall weep the fate of Agamemnon.

Ores. A stranger as I am, I cannot look
 With cold indiff'rence on the noble race
 Of Atreus, 'tis a Grecian's duty ever
 To weep the fate of heroes, and I ought——
 But doth Electra live in Argos still ?

Pam. She doth, she's here.

Ores. I run, I fly to meet her.

Py. Ha ! whither woud'st thou go ! what, brave the
 Hazard thy precious life ! forbear my lord. [gods !
 O ! Sir, conduct us to the neighb'ring temple,

[To Pammenes.

There will we lay our gifts before the altar
 In humble duty, and adore that God,
 Who rul'd the waves, and sav'd us from destruction.

Ores. Wilt thou conduct us to the sacred tomb,
 Where lie the ashes of a murther'd hero ?
 There must I offer to his honour'd shade
 A secret sacrifice. .

Pam. O heav'nly justice,
 Thou sacrifice to him ! amidst his foes !
 O noble youth ! my master had a son,
 Who, in Electra's arms—but I forbear,
 Ægisthus comes : away ; I'll follow you.

Ores. Ægisthus ! ha !

Py. We must avoid his presence.

S C E N E III.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, PAMMENES.

Ægis. Who are those strangers ? one of them me-
 thought [To Pammenes.
 Seem'd, by his stately port and fair demeanor,
 Of noble birth, a gloom of melancholy
 Hangs on his brow ; he struck me as he past :
 Is he our subject ? know you whence he came ?

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G

Pam.

Pam. I only know they are unfortunate ;
 Driv'n by the tempest on those rocks, they came
 For shelter here ; as strangers I reliev'd them ;
 It was my duty : if they tell me truth,
 Greece is their country.

Ægif. Thou shalt answer for them
 On peril of thy life.

Cly. Alas ! my lord,
 Can these poor objects raise suspicion ?

Ægif. Yes :
 The people murmur ; ev'ry thing alarms me.

Cly. Such for these fifteen years hath been our fate,
 To fear, and to be fear'd ; the bitter poison
 To all my happiness.

Ægif. Away, Pammenes ;
 Let me know who and whence they are ; why thus
 They come so near the palace : from what port
 Their vessel sail'd, and wherefore on the seas
 Where I command : away, and bring me word.

SCENE IV.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Ægif. Well, Madam, to remove your idle fears,
 Th' interpreters of heav'n it seems, at length,
 Have been consulted ; but in vain : their silence
 Doubles your grief, and heightens your despair ;
 For to thyself, thy restless spirit ne'er
 Will know repose ; thou tremblest at the thought
 Of thy son's death, yet fear'st his dang'rous life :
 Consult no more your doubtful oracles,
 And hesitating priests, that brood in secret
 O'er the dark bosom of futurity ;
 But hear Ægisthus, he shall give thee peace,
 And satisfy thy soul : this hand determines,
 This tongue pronounces Clytemnæstra's fate :
 If thou woud'st live and reign, confide in me,
 And me alone, and let me hear no more
 Of your unworthy son ; but for Electra,

She's

She's to be fear'd, and we must think of her:
 Perhaps her marriage with my Plisthenes
 Might stop the mouth of faction, and appease
 The discontented people: thou would'st wish
 To see the deadly hatred, that so long
 Hath rag'd between us, soften'd into peace;
 To see our int'rests and our hearts united:
 Let it be so. Go thou, and talk with her;
 But take good heed her pride refuses not
 The proffer'd boon, that were an insult soon
 She might repent of; but I hope with you,
 That slav'ry hath bow'd down her haughty spirit,
 That this unhop'd for, unexpected change
 From poverty and chains to rank and splendor,
 Join'd to a mother's kind authority,
 And above all, Ambition, will persuade her
 To seize the golden minute, and be wise:
 But if she spurns the happiness that courts her,
 Her insolence shall meet its due reward.
 Your foolish fondness, and her father's name,
 Have fed her pride too long; but let her dread,
 If she submits not, a severer fate,
 Chains heavier far, and endless banishment.

S C E N E V.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA.

Cly. Come near, my daughter, and with milder look
 Behold thy mother: I have mourn'd in secret,
 And wept with thee thy hard and cruel bondage,
 Though not unmerited; for sure thy hatred
 Was most unjust, Electra: as a queen,
 I was offended; as a mother, griev'd;
 But I have gain'd your pardon, and your rights
 Are all restor'd.

Elec. O Madam, at your feet——

Cly. But I wou'd still do more.

Elec. What more?

Cly. Support

Your race, restore the honour'd name of Pelops,
And re-unite his long-divided children.

Elec. Ha! talk'st thou of Orestes? speak, go on.

Clyt. I speak of thee, and hope at last Electra
Will be Electra's friend: I know thy soul
Aspires to empire; be thyself again,
And let thy hopes transport thee to the throne
Of Argos and Mycenæ; rise from chains
And ignominious slav'ry to the throne
Of thy great ancestors: Ægisthus yields
To my intreaties, as a daughter yet
He wou'd embrace thee, to his Phisthenes
Wou'd join Electra; ev'ry hour the youth
From Epidaurus is expected here;
When he returns he weds you: look, my daughter,
Tow'rd's the bright prospect of thy future glory,
And bury all the past in deep oblivion.

Elec. Can I forget the past, or look with joy
On that which is to come? O cruel fate,
This is the worst indignity that e'er
Electra bore: remember whence I sprang,
Remember, I am Agamemnon's daughter,
And wou'd'st thou bind me to his murth'rer's son?
Give me my chains again, oppress my soul
With all the horrors of base servitude;
All that the tyrant e'er inflicted on me,
Shame and reproach suit with my sad condition;
I have supported them, and look'd on death
Without a fear: a thousand times Ægisthus
Hath threaten'd me with death, but this is worse;
Thou art more cruel far to ask my vows,
My love, my honour; but I see your aim,
I know your purpose; poor Orestes slain,
His murth'rer trembles at a sister's claim,
And dreads my title to a father's throne:
The tyrant wants my hand to second him,
To seal his poor precarious rights with mine,
And make me an accomplice in his guilt:
O if I have a right Ægisthus fears,
Let him erase my title in my blood,
And tear it from me: if another arm

Be needful to his purpose, lend him thine ;
Strike here, and join Electra to her brother ;
Strike here, and I shall know 'tis Clytemnæstra.

Clyt. It is too much : ungrateful as thou art,
I pity'd thee ; but all my hopes are past :
What have I done, what wou'd I do, to bend
Thy stubborn heart ? Tears, menaces, reproaches,
And love and tenderness, the throne itself,
Which but for me thou never cou'd'st have hop'd,
Pray'rs, punishment, and pardon, nought avail'd,
And now I yield thee to thy fate : farewell !
Thou say'st that thou shalt know me for thy mother,
For Clytemnæstra, by my cruelty :
I am thy mother, and I am thy queen,
Remember that ; to Agamemnon's race
Nought do I owe but hatred and revenge ;
I will not warm a serpent in my breast
To sting me : henceforth storm, complain, and weep,
I shall not heed the clamours of a slave :
I lov'd thee once, with grief I own I lov'd thee ;
But from this hour remember Clytemnæstra
Is not thy mother, but Ægisthus' wife ;
The bonds are broken that united us,
Electra broke them ; nature hath disclaim'd,
And I abjure them.

S C E N E VI.

ELECTRA, alone.

Gracious heav'n ! is this
A mother's voice ? O day the bitt'rest sure
That ever rose since my dear father's death !
I fear I said too much ; but my full heart,
Spite of myself, wou'd pour its venom forth :
She told me my Orestes was no more ;
Cou'd I bear that ? O if a cruel mother
Has robb'd me of my best, my dearest treasure,
Why shou'd I court my worst of foes, why fawn
And cringe to her, to live a vile dependent

On her precarious bounties ; to lift up
 These wither'd hands to unrelenting heav'n,
 To see my father's bed and throne usurp'd
 By this base spoiler, this inhuman tyrant,
 Who robb'd me of a mother's heart, and now
 Hath ta'en Orestes from me ?

S C E N E VII.

ELECTRA, IPHISA.

Ipb. O Electra,
 Complain no more.

Elec. Why not ?

Ipb. Partake my joy.

Elec. Joy is a stranger to this heart, Iphisa,
 And ever shall be.

Ipb. Still there's hope.

Elec. O no,

Still must we weep : for if I may believe
 A mother, our dear brother, our Orestes,
 Is dead.

Ipb. And if I may believe these eyes,
 He lives, he's here, Electra.

Elec. Can it be ?

Good heav'n ! O do not trifle with a heart
 Like mine : Iphisa, did'st thou say Orestes ?

Ipb. I did.

Elec. Thou wou'd'st not with a flatt'ring dream
 Deceive me, my Iphisa—but, go on,
 For hope and fear distract me.

Ipb. O my sister,
 Two strangers, cast by some benignant God
 On these unhappy coasts, are just arriv'd,
 And hither, by the care of good Pammenes,
 Conducted ; one of them——

Elec. I faint : I die——

Well, one of them——

Ipb. I saw the noble youth :
 O what a lustre sparkled in his eyes ;

His

His air, his mein, his ev'ry gesture bore
 The perfect semblage of a demi-god ;
 Ev'n as they paint th' illustrious Grecian chief,
 The conqueror of Troy ; such majesty
 And sweet deportment ne'er did I behold ;
 But with Pammenes he retir'd, and hid
 His beauteous form from my desiring eyes :
 Struck with the charming image, and amaz'd,
 I ran to seek thee here, beneath the shade
 Of this dark grove, to tell the pleasing tale :
 But mark what follow'd—on the sacred tomb,
 Where we so oft have mingled our sad tears,
 I saw fresh garlands, saw the votive wreath,
 The water sprinkled o'er it, and the hair
 Doubtless of those whom I so late had seen,
 Th' illustrious strangers : near to these was laid,
 What most confirm'd my hopes, a glitt'ring sword,
 That spoke methought the day of vengeance near :
 Who but a son, a brother, and a hero,
 Rais'd by the gods to save his falling country,
 Wou'd dare to brave the tyrant thus ? 'Tis he,
 Electra, heav'n hath sent him to our aid,
 The lightning glares upon us, and the thunder
 Will soon be heard.

Elec. I must believe Iphisa,
 And hope the best ; but is it not a snare
 Laid by the tyrant ? Come : we'll know the truth,
 Let us away—I must be satisfy'd.

Ipb. We must not search him in the dark retreat
 Where he is hid ; Pammenes says, his life
 Wou'd answer for it.

Elec. Ha ! what do'st thou say ?
 Alas ! we are deceiv'd, betray'd, Iphisa,
 By cruel heav'n : thus, after fifteen years,
 Restor'd, Orestes wou'd have ran with joy
 To the dear arms that sav'd him, wou'd have cheer'd
 Electra's mournful heart, he ne'er had fled
 From thee, Iphisa : O that sword thou saw'st,
 Which rais'd thy sanguine hope, alarms my fears ;
 A cruel mother wou'd be well inform'd,
 And in her eyes I read the barb'rous joy

She felt within : O dart one ray of hope,
 Ye vengeful gods, on my despairing soul !
 Will not Pammenes yield to my intreaties ?
 He will ; he must : away, I'll speak to him.

Ipb. Do not, Electra ; think what cruel eyes
 Watch o'er our steps, and mark our ev'ry action.
 If he is come, we shall discover him
 By our fond zeal, and hazard his sweet life :
 If we're deceiv'd, our search but irritates
 The tyrant, and endangers good Pammenes :
 But let us pay our duty at the tomb,
 There we at least may weep without offence.
 Who knows, Electra, but the noble stranger
 May meet us in that blest asylum ; there
 That heav'n, whose goodness thy impatient rage
 Hath call'd in question, may yet hear my vows,
 And give him to our wishes and our tears :
 Let us be gone.

Elec. Thou hast reviv'd my hopes :
 But O ! I die with grief, if thou deceiv'st me.



ACT III. SCENE I.

ORESTES, PYLADES, PAMMENES.

*[A Slave at the further end of the stage carrying an urn,
 and a sword.]*

Pam. **B**LEST be the day that to our wishes thus
 Restores the long-expected hope of Greece,
 My royal master's son, the minister
 Of heav'n's high will, to execute swift vengeance
 On Agamemnon's foes ! The tyrant long
 Hath dreaded, long foreseen th' impending blow ;
 Conscious of guilt, in ev'ry face unknown
 Still he beholds his master and his judge,
 And still Orestes haunts his troubled soul :

Much

Much he enquires concerning you, and longs
 To see you both. I have a thousand fears,
 A thousand hopes; heav'n grant we may succeed!
 Mean time I have obey'd your orders, founded
 The people's hearts, and strove to animate
 Their zeal; inspir'd them with the distant hope
 Of an avenger; soon or late the race
 Of rightful kings must prosper: ev'ry heart
 Glow'd with warm transport at Orestes' name;
 Awaken'd from her slumber, Vengeance rises
 With double vigour; my few faithful friends,
 Who dwell in this lone desert with Pammenes,
 Lift up their hands to heav'n, and call on thee;
 And yet I tremble to behold thee here
 Unarm'd and unassisted, lest some chance
 Discover thee, and blast our hopes: the foe
 Is barb'rous, active, vigilant, and bold;
 One fatal stroke may ruin all; whilst thou,
 Against a tyrant seated on his throne,
 Bring'st nothing but Orestes, and his friend.

Pyl. And are not they sufficient? 'Tis the work
 Of heav'n that oft fulfils its own designs
 By means most wonderful, that in the deep
 O'erwhelm'd our little all, and here alone
 Hath left us to perform the sacrifice.
 Sometimes it arms the sov'reigns of the earth
 With tenfold vengeance; sometimes, in contempt
 Of human valour, strikes in awful silence;
 Nature and friendship then exert the rights
 Of heav'n, and vindicate its pow'r divine.

Ores. Orestes asks no other aid, no arm
 But thine, my Pylades.

Pyl. Take heed, my friend,
 Quit not the paths of safety pointed out
 By the just gods; remember thou art bound
 By solemn oath to hide thee from Electra;
 Your peace, your happiness, your kingdom, all
 Depend upon it: O refrain your transports,
 Dissemble, and obey; 'tis fit Electra
 Shou'd be deceiv'd, ev'n more than Clytemnæstra.

Pam. Thank heav'n, that thus ordain'd it for thy
 Already hath Electra, bath'd in tears, [safety.
 And calling for her great avenger, fill'd
 These solitary mansions with her cries ;
 Importunate and bold, she sought me out,
 And with imprudent warmth, demanded loud,
 Where was her brother, where her dear Orestes :
 Nature had whisper'd to her anxious heart
 He was not far from his Electra : scarce
 Cou'd I with-hold her eager steps.

Ores. Ye gods !
 Must I refrain ? O insupportable !

Pyl. You hesitate : O think, my dear Orestes,
 Think on the menaces of angry heav'n,
 Think on its goodness that preserv'd thy life
 From ev'ry danger ; if thou should'st oppose
 Its sacred will, eternal wrath awaits
 To blast thy purpose ; tremble, son of Atreus
 And Tantalus, remember what thy hapless race
 Hath suffer'd, nor expect a milder doom.

Ores. What pow'r invincible presides unseen
 O'er human actions, and directs our fate ?
 Is it a crime to listen to the voice
 Of fond affection ! O eternal justice,
 Thou deep abyss, unsearchable to man !
 Shall not our weakness and our guilt by thee
 Be still distinguish'd ? shall the man who wanders
 From virtue's paths unknowing, and who braves
 Thy pow'r, shall he who yields to nature's laws,
 And he who breaks them, share an equal fate ?
 But shall the slave condemn his master ? Heav'n
 Gave us our being, and can owe us nothing ;
 Therefore no more : in silence I obey.
 Give me the urn, the ring, and bloody sword,
 Which thou hast hither brought, they shall be offer'd
 Far from Electra's sight : let us be gone ;
 I'll see my sister when I have reveng'd her.
 Go thou, Pammenes, and prepare the hearts
 Of thy brave followers for the great event
 Which Greece awaits, and I must execute :

Deceive

Deceive Ægisthus, and my guilty mother ;
 Let them enjoy the transitory bliss,
 The short-liv'd pleasure of Orestes' death,
 If an unnatural mother can behold
 With joy the ashes of a murther'd son :
 Here will I wait, and stop them as they pass.

S C E N E II.

ELECTRA and IPHISA on one side of the Stage,
 ORESTES and PYLADES on the other, with a
 slave carrying an urn, and a sword.

Elec. Hope disappointed is the worst of sorrows.
 O my Iphisa, all thy flatt'ring dreams [To Iphisa.
 Are vanish'd, and Pammenes, with a word,
 Hath undeceiv'd us ; the fair day that shone
 So bright is clouded o'er, and darkness spreads
 On ev'ry side : alas ! our wretched life
 Is but a round of never-ending woes.

Ores. Two women, and in tears ! [To Pylades.

Pyl. Alas, my lord,
 Beneath a tyrant all things wear the face
 Of grief and mis'ry.

Ores. In Ægisthus' court
 Nothing should reign but sorrow.

Iph. Look Electra, [To Electra.
 The strangers come this way.

Elec. Unhappy omen !
 They did pronounce Ægisthus' hated name.

Iph. One is that hero whom I told thee of ;
 The noble youth——

Elec. Alas ! I too, like thee, [Looking at Orestes.
 Had been deceiv'd.

Who are ye, wretched strangers ; [Turning to Orestes.
 And what hath led you to this fatal shore ?

Ores. We come to see the king who reigns in Argos,
 And take our orders from him.

Elec.

Elec. Are ye Grecians,
And call ye him a king, the murderer
Of Agamemnon?

Ores. He is sov'reign here,
And heav'n commands us to respect his throne,
Not to dispute his title.

Elec. Horrid maxim!
And what have you to ask of this proud king,
This bloody monster here?

Ores. We come to bring him
Some happy tidings.

Elec. Dreadful then to us
They must be.

Ipb. Ha! an urn! O grief, O horror!

[Seeing an urn.]

Pyl. Orestes——

Elec. O ye gods! Orestes dead?
I faint, I die.

Ores. What have we done my friend!
They cou'd not be mistaken, for their grief
Betrays them: O! my blood runs cold.—Fair princess,
Be comforted, and live.

Elec. Orestes dead!
And can I live? O no, barbarians, here
Complete your cruelty.

Ipb. Alas! you see
The poor remains of Agamemnon; we
Are his unhappy daughters, the sad sisters
Of lost Orestes.

Ores. O Electra! O
Iphisa? O where am I! cruel gods!
Take from their sight those monuments of woe,

[To the slave carrying the urn.]

That fatal urn, which——

Elec. Wou'd'st thou take it from me?

[Running towards the urn.]

Wou'd'st thou deprive me of the little all
That's left Electra by offended heav'n?
O give it me.

[She takes the urn, and embraces it.]

Ores. Forbear; what wou'd'st thou do?

Pyl.

Pyl. Away: Ægisthus only must receive
These precious reliques.

Elec. Must I then behold
My brother's ashes in a tyrant's hand,
And are Orestes' murderers before me?

Oref. Horrid reproach! it shocks my very soul:
I can no longer——

Elec. Yet you weep with me:
O, in the name of the avenging gods,
If you are guiltless, if your gen'rous hands
Collected his dear ashes——

Oref. Gracious heav'n!

Elec. If ye lament his death, O answer me:
Who told you of his fate: art thou his friend?
Speak, noble youth: both dumb! yet both afflicted:
Ev'n whilst your words plant daggers in my heart,
Ye seem to pity me.

Oref. It is too much;
The gods have been obey'd enough already.

Elec. What say'st thou?

Oref. Leave these poor remains.

Elec. O no:

I never will: alas! is ev'ry heart
Inflexible? I tell thee, cruel stranger,
I must not, cannot give thee back again
The fatal gift that pity hath bestow'd:
'Tis my Orestes; and I will embrace him:
Behold his dying sister.

Oref. Cruel gods!

Where are your thunders now? O strike: Electra,
I can no longer——

Elec. Ha!

Oref. I ought——

Pyl. O heav'n!

Elec. Go on——

Oref. Know then——

SCENE

S C E N E III.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ORESTES,
PYLADES, ELECTRA, IPHISA, PAM-
MENES, Guards.

Ægis. O glorious spectacle!
Fortune I thank: Can it be, Pammenes?
My rival dead? it is, it must be true,
Electra's grief confirms it.

Elec. Dreadful hour?

Ores. To what am I reserv'd?

Ægis. Seize on the urn,
And wrest it from her.

[They take the urn from her.]

Elec. O thou hast robb'd me of the only good
This life cou'd e'er afford me, barb'rous monster!
O take Electra too, tear forth this heart
And join me to Orestes; father, son,
Sister, and brother, all thy wretched victims
Unite to satiate thy revenge: now, tyrant,
Enjoy thy happiness, enjoy thy crimes:
And thou, inhuman mother, look with him
On the delightful spectacle, it suits
Thy nature, and is worthy of you both.

[Iphisa leads her off.]

S C E N E IV.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ORESTES,
PYLADES, Guards.

Clyt. Must I bear this?

Ægis. She shall be punish'd for it:
Let her complain to heav'n, for heav'n itself
Will justify Ægisthus; it approves
Where it forbids not; therefore I am guiltless,
And happy too: my throne stands firmly now,

My

My life's in safety ; but I must reward
The zeal and valour of these noble Grecians.

Oref. It was our duty, royal sir, to lay
These proofs before you : take this sword, this ring,
You must remember it : 'twas Agamemnon's.

Clyt. And was it then by thee Orestes sell ?

Ægif. If thou hast serv'd me, thine be the reward :
But, say, who art thou, of what race ?

Oref. My name
Must not as yet be known ; perhaps hereafter
It may be : in the fields of Troy my father
Distinguish'd shone amongst the great avengers
Of Menelaus ; in those days of glory
He fought, and fell : deserted and forlorn,
Left by a cruel mother, and pursued
By most inhuman foes, this friend alone
Supported me ; was fortune, father, all :
With him I still have trod the paths of honour,
With him defy'd the malice of my fate :
Such is my story.

Ægif. But say where thy arm
Revenge'd me of this hated prince : inform me.

Oref. 'Twas in a wood that to the temple leads
Of Epidaurus, near Achemor's tomb.

Ægif. The king had set a price upon his head :
How come you not to ask for your reward ?

Oref. Because I hated infamy, and fought
For vengeance, not for hire ; I did not mean
To sell his blood ; a private motive rais'd
This arm against him, as my friend well knows,
And I revenge'd myself without the aid
Of kings, nor shall I boast the victory :
Forgive me, Sir, I tremble ; for the widow
Of Agamemnon's here ; perhaps I've serv'd,
Perhaps offended her ; I'll take my leave.

Ægif. Thou shalt not ; stay, I charge thee.

Clyt. Let him go :
That urn, and the sad story he has told,
Have fill'd my soul with horror : heav'n, my lord,
Protects your throne and life, be thankful for it,
And leave a mother to indulge her sorrows.

Oref.

Oref. Madam, I thought that Agamemnon's son
Was hateful to you.

Clyt. I must own I fear'd him.

Oref. Fear'd him!

Clyt. I did indeed; for he was born
To be most guilty.

Oref. Guilty! and to whom?

Clyt. The wretched wanderer, thou know'st, was
doom'd

To hate a mother, doom'd to shed the blood
From whence he sprang; such was his horrid fate:
Perhaps he had fulfill'd—and yet his death,
I know not why, affrights me, and I tremble
To look on you who sav'd me from his vengeance.

Oref. Alas! a son against a mother arm'd!
O who cou'd loose that sacred tye? perhaps
He wish'd——

Clyt. O heav'n!

Ægif. What say'st thou? didst thou know him?

Pyl. He will discover all.

[*Aside.*

He did, my lord,

[*To Ægisthus.*

The wretched soon unite, and soon divide;

At Delphi first we saw him.

Oref. Yes: I knew
His purpose well.

Ægif. What was't?

Oref. To murder thee.

Ægif. I've seen his malice long, but I despis'd it.
Mean time Electra us'd Orestes' name
To spread division o'er my kingdom; she
Was my worst foe: thou hast reveng'd me of her,
Take thy reward, I yield her to thy pow'r;
She shall be thine: the haughty maid, who spurn'd
The great alliance with Ægisthus' son;
Henceforth she is thy slave: the wretched race
Of Priam long beneath the conqueror's yoke
Submissive bow'd, and dragg'd the servile chain;
And wherefore shou'd not Agamemnon's blood
Bend in its turn, and share an equal fate?

Clyt. Wou'd Clytemnestra suffer that!

Ægif.

Ægif. Thou woud'st not
 Defend thy worst of foes ; proscribe Orestes,
 Yet spare Electra.
 Leave the urn with me.

[*To Orestes.*

Oref. We will, my lord, and shall accept your offer.

Clyt. That were to carry our resentment further
 Than justice warrants : let him hence, and bear
 Some other recompense : we too must go :
 Let us, my lord, I beg thee, let us quit.
 These horrid mansions of the dead, where nought
 But dreadful images on ev'ry side
 Surround me : O ! we never can prepare
 The bloody feast between the father's tomb
 And the son's ashes how shall we invoke
 The household gods, whom we have injur'd ; how,
 Amidst our cruel sports, give up the blood
 Of Clytemnæstra to the murderer
 Of her Orestes ? O it must not be ;
 I tremble at the thought : my fears, *Ægisthus*,
 Shou'd waken thine : this stranger rives my heart ;
 His very sight is deadli'st pois'n to me.
 Away, my lord, and let me be conceal'd
 From ev'ry eye ; wou'd it were possible
 To hide me from myself !

[*Exit Clytemnæstra.*

Ægif. Stay thou, and wait
 Till time befriend thee ; nature for a moment
 Is clamorous and loud, but soon as reason
 Shall re-assume its empire, int'rest then
 Must plead thy cause, and she alone be heard.
 Mean time remain with us, and celebrate
 Our nuptial day :
 Haste you to Epidaurus,

[*To Orestes.*

[*To one of his attendants.*

And hither bring my son ; let him confirm
 The welcome tidings.

SCENE

S C E N E V.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

Oref. Yes, Orestes comes
To join the cruel pomp, and make thy feast
A feast of blood.

Pyl. O how I tremble for thee!
I fear'd thy love; I fear'd thy tenderness;
And, more than all, thy honest rage, that burst
In transports forth when thou beheld'st the tyrant:
I saw thee ready to insult him; saw
Thy soul take fire at Agamemnon's name,
And dreaded the sad consequence.

Oref. My mother,
O Pylades, my mother pierc'd my heart.
Did'st thou not mark the workings of her soul
Whilst I was speaking? O I felt them all.
Scarce cou'd my voice in falt'ring accents tell
The melancholy tale, whilst Clytemnæstra
Still gaz'd, and trembled still: a father's murder;
A sister unreveng'd; a tyrant yet
Unpunish'd; and a mother to be taught
Her int'rest and her duty; what a weight
Of secret cares! great heav'n complete thy work!
Urge on the ling'ring moments that retard
My vengeance; O let me perform the task
Of love, and hatred; let me mix the blood
Of base Ægisthus with the vile remains
Of Plisthenes; let sweet Electra see
The cruel tyrant gasping at my feet,
And know her dear deliv'rer in Orestes!

S C E N E VI.

ORESTES, PYLADES, PAMMENES.

Oref. What hast thou done, Pammenes, may we hope—

Pam. O my dear lord, ne'er, since the fatal day
When

When Agamemnon fell, did greater perils
Threaten thy precious life.

Oref. Ha! what hath happened?

Pyl. Still

Must I have cause to tremble for Orestes?

Pam. This instant is arriv'd a messenger
From Epidaurus, and ere this relates
The death of Plisthenes.

Pyl. Immortal gods!

Oref. And knows he that Orestes slew his son?

Pam. They speak of nothing but his death; ere long
Fresh tidings are expected; and the news
Mean time conceal'd from Greece that she has lost
One of her tyrants; the king, still in doubt,
Shuts himself up with Clytemnæstra: this
I learn'd from one, who, to the royal blood
Still faithful, pines in loathsome servitude
Beneath the proud usurper.

Oref. I have gather'd
At least the first fair fruits of promis'd vengeance;
Grant me, ye gods, to reap a plenteous harvest!
Think'st thou, my friend, they wou'd uplift this arm
In vain, and only prosper to deceive me;
To my successful valour give the son,
And after yield me to the father's pow'r?
Let us away: danger shou'd make us bold;
Who fears not death is master of his foe:
I'll seize the moment of uncertainty,
Ere the full day of truth glares in upon him,
And points his rage.

Pam. Away: you must be known
To those few noble spirits who will die
To serve their prince; this secret place conceals
Some faithful friends, who may be still more useful,
Because unknown.

Pyl. Haste then; and if the tomb
Of thy dear father, if thy honour'd name
Join'd to Electra's, if the wrath of heav'n
Against usurpers, if the gracious gods
Who hither led thee, if they all shou'd fail,
If this detested spot is doom'd by fate

To

To be thy grave, O take a wretched life
 To thee devoted, we will die together,
 That comfort's left; for Pylades shall fall
 Close by thy side, and worthy of Orestes.

Oref. Strike me, kind heav'n! but O for pity save
 His matchless valour, and protect my friend!



ACT IV. SCENE I.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

Oref. **P**ERHAPS the vigilance of good Pammenes
 May for a while remove the king's suspicions;
 And gracious heav'n, in pity to our woes,
 Deceive Ægisthus to a fond belief,
 That the devoted race of Tantalus
 Is now no more; but O, my Pylades,
 The sword I offer'd at my father's tomb
 Is stol'n by sacrilegious hands, that reach
 Ev'n to the sacred mansions of the dead;
 If it be carry'd to the tyrant, all
 Will be discover'd; let us haste, my friend,
 And seize him, ere it be too late.

Pyl. Pammenes

Is watchful o'er our int'rest; we must wait
 For him: when we have gather'd the few friends
 That mean to serve us, be this tomb the place
 Of meeting for us all, Pammenes then
 Will join us here.

Oref. O Pylades, O heav'n!

This barb'rous law that forces me to wound
 A tender heart that lives but for Orestes!
 And must I leave Electra to her sorrows?

Pyl. Yes: thou hast sworn it, therefore persevere;
 Thou hast more cause to dread Electra now
 Than all thy foes; she may destroy, but ne'er
 Can serve us, and the tyrant's eyes may soon

Be open'd: O subdue, if possible,
The pangs of nature, and conceal thy love:
We came not here to comfort thy *Electra*,
But to revenge her.

Ores. See, my *Pylades*,
She comes this way, perhaps, in search of me.

Pyl. Her ev'ry step is watch'd: you must not see her:
Begone; and doubt not, I'll observe her well;
The eyes of friendship seldom are deceiv'd.

S C E N E II.

ELECTRA, IPHISA, PYLADES.

Elec. The villain hath escap'd me; he avoids
My hated sight, and leaves me to my fate,
To fruitless rage, and unavailing tears,
Without the hope of vengeance: say, barbarian,
Thou vile accomplice in his crimes, where went
The murderer, my tyrant, my new lord,
(For so it seems *Ægisthus* has decreed)
Where is he gone?

Pyl. To do the will of heav'n,
In dutiful obedience to the gods;
And well wou'd it become the royal maid
To follow his example: fate oft times
Deceives the hearts of men, directs in secret,
And guides their wand'ring steps thro' paths unknown:
Ofttimes it sinks us in the deep abyss
Of mis'ry, and then raises us to joy;
Binds us in chains, or lifts us to a throne,
And gives us life midst horrors, tombs, and death.
Complain no more, but yield to thy new sorrows;
Be patient, and be happy: fare thee well.

S C E N E III.

ELECTRA, IPHISA.

Elec. He swells my rage to fury and despair:
Thinks he I'll tamely bear these cruel insults?

Cou'd

Cou'd not a father's and a brother's death
 Fill up the measure of Electra's woes,
 But she must bend beneath the vile assassin
 Of her Orestes; be a common slave
 To all the murth'ers of her hapless race?
 Thou dreadful sword, wet with Orestes' blood,
 Expos'd in triumph at the sacred tomb,
 Thou execrable trophy, for a moment
 Thou did'st deceive me, but thou hast insulted
 The ashes of the dead; I'll make thee serve
 A nobler purpose: tho' Ægisthus hides
 His guilty head, and with the queen in secret
 Plans future crimes, and meditates destruction,
 Still we may find the murth'rer of Orestes:
 I cannot bathe me in the blood of both
 My tyrants, but of one at least my soul
 Shall be reveng'd.

Ipb. I cannot blame the grief
 Which I partake; but hear me, hear the voice
 Of reason; ev'ry tongue speaks of Orestes;
 They say, he lives, and the king's fears confirm it.
 You saw Pammenes talking with this stranger
 In secret, saw his ardent zeal to serve
 And to attend him: think'lt thou, our best friend,
 Our comforter, the good old man, wou'd e'er
 Associate with a murth'rer? never, never;
 He cou'd not be so base.

Elec. He may be false,
 Or weak; old age is easily deceiv'd:
 We are betray'd by all; I know we are:
 Did not the cruel stranger boast his deed?
 Did not Ægisthus yield me up a victim?
 Was not Electra made the price of guilt,
 The murtherer's reward? Orestes calls me
 To join him in the tomb: now then, my sister,
 If e'er thou lov'dst Electra, pity her
 In her last moments; bloody they must be,
 And terrible. Away; inform thyself
 Touching Pammenes; see if the assassin
 Be with the queen: she flatters all my foes;
 She heard unmov'd the murder of her son,

And

And seem'd, O gods! a mother seem'd to share
 The guilty transport with her savage lord.
 O that this sword cou'd reach him in her arms,
 And pierce the traitor's heart! I'll do't.

Ipb. No more:

Indeed you wrong her; for the sight of him
 Offends her: be not thus precipitate
 And rash, Electra; I will to Pammenes,
 And talk with him: or I am much deceiv'd,
 Or by their silence they but mean to hide
 Some myst'ry from us: your imprudent warmth
 (Yet who wou'd not forgive it in the wretched?)
 Perhaps alarms them, and they wou'd conceal
 From you their purpose; what it is, I know not:
 Pammenes seems to shun you, let me go
 And speak to him? but do not, my Electra,
 Hazard a deed thou wilt too late repent of.

S C E N E IV.

E L E C T R A.

Elec. The subtle tyrants have gain'd o'er Pammenes;
 Old age is weak and fearful: what can faith
 Or friendship do against the hand of pow'r?
 Henceforth Electra to herself alone
 Shall trust her vengeance: 'tis enough: these hands,
 Arm'd with despair, shall act with double vigour.
 Arise, ye furies, leave your dark abode
 For seats more guilty, and another hell;
 Open your dreary caverns, and receive
 Your victims; bring your flaming torches here,
 Daughters of Vengeance, arm yourselves and me;
 Approach with Death and Terror in your train;
 Orestes, Agamemnon, and Electra
 Invoke your aid: and lo! they come, I see
 Their glitt'ring swords, and unappall'd behold them;
 They are not half so dreadful as Ægisthus:
 The murth'rer comes; and see, they throng around him;
 Hell points him out, and yields him to my vengeance.

S C E N E

S C E N E V.

ELECTRA, at the bottom of the stage.

ORESTES, on the other side at a distance from her.

Oref. Where am I? hither they directed me;
O my dear country! and, thou fatal spot
That gave me birth, thou great but guilty race
Of Tantalus, for ever shall thy blood
Be wretched? horror here on ev'ry side
Surrounds me: wherefore am I punish'd thus?
What have I done? why must Orestes suffer
For his forefather's crimes?

Elec. What pow'r withholds me?

[Advancing a little from the bottom of the stage.]

I cannot lift my arm against him; but
I will go on.

Oref. Methought I heard a voice:
O my dear father, ever-honour'd shade,
Much injur'd Agamemnon, didst thou groan?

Elec. Just heav'n! durst he pronounce that sacred
And see he weeps: can sighs and penitence [name?
Find entrance here? but what is his remorse
To the dire horrors that Electra feels!

[She comes forward.]

He is alone; now strike—die, traitor—O
I cannot——

Oref. Gods! Electra, art thou here,
Furious and trembling?

Elec. Sure thou art some god
Who thus unnerv'st me:—thou hast slain my brother:
I wou'd have ta'en thy life for't, but the sword
Dropp'd from my hand; thy genius hath prevail'd;
I yield to thee, and must betray my brother.

Oref. Betray him, no! O why am I restrain'd?—

Elec. At sight of thee my resolution dies,
And all is chang'd: cou'd it be thou who fill'd
My soul with terror?

Oref.

Ores. O I wou'd repay
Thy precious tears with hazard of my life.

Elec. Methought I heard thee speak of Agamemnon.
O gentle youth, deceive me not, but speak :
For I had well nigh done a desp'rate deed ;
O shew me all the guilt of it ! explain
The myst'ry ; tell me who thou art.

Ores. O sister
Of dear Orestes, fly from me, avoid me.

Elec. But wherefore ! speak.

Ores. No more : — I am — take heed
They see us not together.

Elec. Gracious heav'n !
Thou fill'st my heart with terror and with joy.

Ores. O ! if thou lov'st thy brother —

Elec. Love him ! yes :
And O ! in thee I hear a father's voice,
And see his features ; nature hath unveil'd
The myst'ry : O be kind and speak for her,
Do not deny it ; say thou art my brother :
Thou art, I know thou art — my dear Orestes ;
How could a sister seek thy precious life ?

Ores. Heav'n threats in vain, and nature will prevail :
[Embracing her.]

Electra is more pow'rful than the gods.

Elec. The gods have giv'n a sister to thy vows,
And dost thou fear their wrath ?

Ores. Their cruel orders
Wou'd have depriv'd me of my dear Electra,
And may perhaps chastise a brother's weakness.

Elec. Thy weakness there was virtue ; O rejoice
With me, Orestes ; wherefore wou'd'st thou force me
To that rash act ; it might have cost thee dear.

Ores. I've broke my sacred promise.

Elec. 'Twas thy duty.

Ores. A secret trusted to me by the gods.

Elec. I drew it from thee ; I extorted it ;
Mine be the guilt ; an oath more sacred far
Binds me to vengeance : what hast thou to fear ?

Ores. My destiny, the oracles, the blood
From whence I sprung.

Elec. That blood henceforth shall flow
In purer streams; haste then, and join with me
To scourge the guilty; oracles and gods
Are all propitious to our great design,
And the same pow'r, that sav'd, will guide Orestes.

S C E N E VI.

ELECTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, PAMMENES.

Elec. Rejoice with me, my friends, for I have found
My dear Orestes.

Pyl. Hast thou then reveal'd

[To Orestes.

The dang'rous secret? Could'st thou think—

Ores. If heav'n
Expects obedience, it must give us laws
We can obey.

Elec. Canst thou reproach him thus;
Only for making poor Electra happy?
Woud'st thou adopt the cruel sentiments
Of persecuting foes, and hide Orestes
From my embraces? what unjust decree,
What harsh commands—

Pyl. I meant to save him for thee,
That he might live, and be thy great avenger.

Pam. Princess, thou know'st, in this detested place
They watch thee nearly; ev'ry sigh is heard,
And ev'ry motion carefully observ'd:
Those private friends, whose humble state eludes
The tyrant's search, adore this noble youth,
And wou'd have serv'd him; ev'ry thing's prepar'd;
But thy imprudence now will hazard all.

Elec. Did not Ægisthus give to me a hand,
Stain'd, as he thought, with my Orestes' blood?
Thou'rt my master; I am bound to serve thee.

[To Orestes.

I will obey the tyrant; his commands,
For once, are welcome, and the prospect brightens
On ev'ry side.

Pam.

Pam. It may be clouded soon,
Ægisthus is alarm'd, and we have cause
 To tremble; if he but suspects us, death
 Must be our portion, therefore let us part.

Pyl. Hence, good *Pammenes*, bring our friends together,
 [To *Pammenes*.
 The hours are precious; haste and finish soon
 Thy noble work; 'tis time we shou'd appear,
 And—like ourselves.

S C E N E VII.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA,
ORESTES, PYLADES, Guards.

Ægif. Slaves, execute your office,
 And bear these traitors to the dungeon.

Oref. Once
 There rul'd o'er Argos those who better knew
 The rights of hospitality.

Pyl. *Ægisthus*,
 What is our crime? Inform us, and at least
 Respect this noble youth.

Ægif. Away with them;
 Ye stand aghast, as if ye fear'd to touch
 His sacred person: hence, I say, take heed
 Ye disobey me not: guards, drag them off.

Elec. O stay, barbarian, stay; for heav'n itself
 Pleads for their sacred lives—they tear them from me,
 O gods!

Ægif. *Electra*, tremble for thyself,
 Perfidious as thou art, and dread my wrath.

S C E N E VIII.

ELECTRA, CLYTEMNÆSTRA.

Elec. O hear me, if thou art a mother, hear;
 Let me recal thy former tenderness,

H 2

Forgive

Forgive my guilty rage, the sad effect
 Of unexempl'd sorrows: to complain,
 Is still the mournful privilege of grief:
 Pity these wretched strangers; heav'n perhaps,
 Whose dreadful vengeance thou so long hast fear'd,
 May for their sakes forgive thy past offences;
 The pardon thou bestow'st on them may plead
 For thee: O save 'em, save 'em.

Clyt. Why shoud'st thou
 Be thus solicitous? What int'rest prompts
 Thy ardent zeal?

Elec. Thou see'st, the gods protect them,
 Who sav'd them from the Ocean's boist'rous rage,
 And brought them here: heav'n gives them to thy care,
 And will require them at thy hands—to one,
 O! if thou knew'st him—but they both are wretched.
 Are we in Argos, or at Tauris, where
 The cruel priestess bids her altars smoke
 With stranger's blood? What must I do to save them?
 Command, and I obey: to Plisthenes
 You'd have me wedded; I submit, tho' death
 Were far more welcome; lead me to his bed.

Clyt. You mean to mock us: know'st thou not, he's
 dead?

Elec. Just heav'n! and hath Ægisthus lost a son?

Clyt. I see the joy that sparkles in thy eyes;
 Thou'rt pleas'd to hear it.

Elec. No: I'm too wretched
 To be delighted with another's woe:
 I pity the unhappy, nor wou'd shed
 The blood of innocence: O save the strangers!
 I ask no more.

Clyt. Away: I understand thee,
 And know thee but too well; thou hast confirm'd
 The king's suspicions, and reveal'd the secret:
 One of the strangers is—Orestes.

Elec. Well,
 Suppose it were; suppose that gracious heav'n,
 In tender pity, had restor'd thy son——

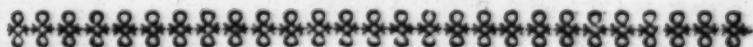
Clyt. O dreadful moment! how am I to act?

Etc.

Elec. Is it a doubt, and can'st thou hesitate?
Thy son! O heav'n! think on his past misfortunes,
Think on his merits; but, if still thy mind
Is doubtful, all is lost: farewell Orestes.

Clyt. I'm not in doubt; I am resolv'd; ev'n thou,
With all thy fury, can'st not change the love,
The tenderness I bear him: I will guard,
Save, and protect him—he may punish me,
Perhaps he will; I tremble at his name;
No matter—I'm a mother still, and love
My children; thou may'st yet preserve thy hate.

Elec. No: I will fall submissive at thy feet,
And thank thy bounty: now, indulgent heav'n,
Thy mercy shines superior to thy wrath:
For thou hast giv'n a mother to my vows,
Chang'd her resentful heart, and sav'd Orestes..



ACT V. SCENE I.

ELECTRA.

I Am forbid to enter here; oppress'd
With fears in vain I lift these hands to heav'n:
Iphisa comes not: but behold the gates
Are open'd: ha! she's here, I tremble.

S C E N E II.

ELECTRA, IPHISA.

Elec. Say,
My dear Iphisa, what have I to hope?
Will Clytemnæstra dare to be a mother?
Has she the pow'r, has she the will, to make us
Some poor amends, for all the cruel evils
She has inflicted on us; Cou'd she ere——

Н 3

But

But she's a slave to guilt, and to Ægisthus:
I am prepar'd to hear the worst; O speak,
Say, all is past, and we must die.

Ipb. I hope,

And yet I fear: Ægisthus hath receiv'd
Some dark suggestions, but is doubtful still,
Whether Orestes is his pris'ner here,
And Clytemnæstra never nam'd her son:
She seems to feel a mother's fondness for him,
And, pierc'd with anguish, trembles for his life:
She struggles with herself, and fears alike
To speak or to be silent; strives to sooth
The tyrant's rage, and save them from his vengeance:
But shou'd Orestes once be known, he dies.

Elec. O cruel thought! perhaps when I implor'd
My barb'rous mother I destroy'd Orestes;
Her grief will but enrage the fierce Ægisthus:
Nature is ever fatal here: I dread
Her silence, and yet wou'd not have her speak;
Danger's on ev'ry side: but say, Iphisa,
What hath Pammenes done?

Ipb. His feeble age

Seems strengthen'd by misfortune, and our dangers
But breathe new spirit o'er his ardent zeal.
To serve our cause; he animates our friends
With double vigour; ev'n the servile throng,
That cringe around the tyrant's throne, begin
To murmur at the name of great Orestes:
Vet'rans, who serv'd beneath the father, burn
With honest ardor to support the son:
Such pow'r have justice and the sacred laws
O'er mortal minds, howe'er by vice corrupted.

Elec. O that Electra cou'd enflame their souls
With glowing virtue, breathe her own fierce spirit
Into their timid hearts, and animate
Their cold resentment! wou'd I had but known,
Ere he arriv'd on this detested shore,
That my Orestes liv'd! or that Pammenes—

SCENE

S C E N E III.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA,
IPHISA, Guards.

Ægif. Guards, seize that hoary traitor,
And let him be confronted with those strangers
Whom I have doom'd to death; he is their friend
And confident, th' accomplice in their crimes:
How dreadful was the snare which they had laid!
O, Clytemnæstra, 'tis the curs'd Orestes,
It must be he; do not deceive thyself,
Do not defend him: O I see it all,
It is too plain: alas! this urn contains
The ashes of my son: the murth'ers brought
This fatal present to his weeping father.

Clyt. Can'st thou believe——

Ægif. I can; I must rely
On the sworn hatred 'twixt th' unhappy children
Of Atreus and Thyestes; must believe
The time, the place, the rage of fierce Electra,
Iphisa's tears, your undeserv'd compassion,
Your ill-tim'd pity for these base assassins;
Orestes lives, and I have lost my son!
But I have caught him in the toils; whiche'er
It be, for yet I know not. I'll be just,
I'll sacrifice the murth'rer to my son,
And to his mother.

Clyt. Horrid sacrifice!
I must not see it.

Ægif. Horrible to thee!

Clyt. O yes; already blood enough hath flow'd
In this sad scene of slaughter: O 'tis time
To end the woes of Pelops' hapless race!
If after all it shou'd not be Orestes,
Wou'd'st thou, on dark suspicion's vague report,
Murder the innocent? and if it be
Indeed my son, my lord, I must defend him,
Must gain his pardon at thy hands, or perish.

Ægif. I cannot, dare not, yield to thy request;
 For thy own sake I dare not; thy fond pity
 May be thy ruin; all that melts thy heart
 To soft compassion, sharpens mine to rage
 And fierce resentment: one of them I know
 Must be Orestes, therefore both shall die;
 I ought not ev'n to hesitate a moment:
 Guards, do your office.

Ipb. O, my lord, behold me
 Low at your feet; must all our hapless race
 Thus humbly bend, thus supplicate in vain?
 Electra, kneel with me, embrace his knees,
 Thy pride destroys us.

Elec. Can I stoop so low?
 Shall I bring foul disgrace on thee, my brother,
 And ignominy, and shame? it shocks my soul;
 But I will suffer all to save Orestes.
 If thou wilt save him, here I promise thee,

[Turning to Ægisthus.

(Not to forget my father's murder, that
 I never can, but) in respectful silence
 To pay thee homage, still to live with thee
 A willing slave, let but my brother live.

Ægif. Thy brother dies, and thou shalt live a slave;
 My vengeance is complete: thy pride is humbled,
 And sues in vain.

Clyt. Ægisthus, 'tis too much,
 To trample thus on the unhappy race
 Of him who was thy master once; away,
 Spite of thy rage, I will defend my son;
 Deaf as thou art to a fond sister's pray'rs,
 A mother's may prevail: O think, my lord,
 Think on thy happy state, above the reach
 Of adverse fortune now, Orestes ne'er
 Can hurt thee, and Electra bends submissive
 Beneath thy pow'r, Iphisa at thy feet;
 Can nothing move thee? I have gone too far
 Already with thee in the paths of guilt,
 And offer'd up a dreadful sacrifice.
 Think'st thou I'll yield thee up my purest blood
 To glut thy rage? Am I for ever doom'd

To take a murth'rous husband to my arms?
 At Aulis one a lovely daughter slew,
 The other threatens to destroy my son
 Before my eyes, close to his father's tomb:
 O rather let this fatal diadem,
 hateful to Greece, and to myself a load
 Of mis'ry, fall with me, and be no more
 Remember'd! O Ægisthus, well thou know'st,
 I lov'd thee, 'tis amongst my blackest crimes,
 And stands the foremost; but I love my children,
 And will defend them: 'gainst thy arm uprais'd
 To shed their blood will lift my vengeful hand,
 And blast thy purpose: tremble, for thou know'st me:
 The bands are sacred that united us,
 Thy int'rest is most dear to Clytemnæstra:
 Remember still, Orestes is my son,
 And fear his mother.

Elec. You surpass my hopes.
 Surely a heart like thine cou'd ne'er be guilty:
 Go on, my honour'd mother, and revenge
 Your children, and your husband.

Ægif. Slave, thou fill'st
 The measure of thy crimes: gods! shall Ægisthus
 With-hold his vengeance for a woman's cries,
 For Agamemnon's widow, and her children?
 Unhappy queen! say, whom do'st thou accuse?
 Whom do'st thou plead for? Hear me and obey..
 Away with them to instant death.

S C E N E IV.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA,
 IPHISA, DYMAS.

Dymas. My lord!

Ægif. Thou seem'st disorder'd: what has happen'd?

Dymas. Orestes is discover'd. [Speak.

Ipb. Ha! where is he?

Clyt. My son!

Elec. My brother!

H.5.

Ægif.

Ægis. Have you punish'd him
As he deserves?

Dymas. My lord, as yet he lives.

Ægis. And wherefore were my orders disobey'd?

Dymas. His friend and fellow-captive, Pylades,
Pointed him out, and to the soldiers shew'd
Great Agamemnon's son; they seem'd much mov'd;
I dread the consequence.

Ægis. I must prevent it,
For they shall die: who dares not to revenge me,
Shall feel my justice: *Dymas*, follow me:
Stay thou and guard his sisters; I defy
The blood of Agamemnon: from the father
Of *Plisthenes*, and great *Thyestes'* son,
What mortal, or what god, shall save *Orestes*?

SCENE V.

CLYTEMNÆSTRA, ELECTRA, IPHISA.

Iph. Fear not, but follow him; *Electra*, speak,
Exhort our friends, and animate their zeal.

Elec. O, in the name of pow'rful nature, now

[*To Clytemnæstra.*

Complete thy noble work; conduct us, fly——

Clyt. You must not hence, the guards will not permit
Stay here, my children, and rely on me, [it:
On a fond mother, and a tender wife:
I will perform the double task, and take
Orestes and *Ægisthus* to my care.

SCENE VI.

ELECTRA, IPHISA.

Iph. Alas! th' avenging god pursues us still;
Though she defends *Orestes*, still *Ægisthus*
Is at her heart; perhaps the tender cries

Of pity and remorse shall nought avail
Against the tyrant ; he is proud, revengeful,
Implacable, and furious : who shall save
If he condemns ? we must submit, and die.

Elec. O that before my death I had not fall'n
So low as to intreat him, to bely
My honest heart, and supplicate the tyrant !
Despair and horror sink me to the tomb
With infamy and shame ; my vain endeavours,
To save Orestes, but urge on his fate.
Where are those boasted friends Pammenes talk'd of,
Who, with fell rancour, and determin'd hate,
Pursued Ægisthus ? Where those vengeful gods,
Who hid Orestes from my sight, uprais'd
His righteous arm, and promis'd to support him ?
Where are ye now, infernal goddesses,
Daughters of night, ye who so lately shook
Your dreadful torches here ? All nature once
United seem'd to guard and to protect us,
But all desert us now, all court Ægisthus,
And men and gods, and heav'n, and hell, betray me.

S C E N E VII.

ELECTRA, PYLADES, IPHISA.

Elec. What say'st thou, Pylades ? the deed is done ?

Pyl. It is : Electra's free, and heav'n obey'd.

Elec. How ?

Pyl. Yes, Orestes reigns : he sent me hither.

Ip. Just gods !

Elec. Orestes ! is it possible ?

I faint, I die with joy.

Pyl. Orestes lives,

And has reveng'd the blood of innocence.

Elec. What wond'rous pow'r hath wrought this strange
event.

Pyl. His father's name, Electra's, and his own ;
His valour, and his virtue ; our misfortunes,
Justice and pity ; and the pow'r that pleads.

In human hearts for wretchedness like thine.
 Pammenes, by the tyrant's order bound,
 Was led with us to death ; in weeping crowds
 The people follow'd, and deplor'd our fate :
 I saw their rage was equal to their fears,
 But the guards watch'd 'em closely : then Orestes
 Cry'd, strike, ye slaves, and sacrifice the last
 Of Argos' kings ; ye dare not : when he spoke,
 On his fair front such native majesty
 And royal lustre shone, we almost thought
 Great Agamemnon's spirit from the tomb
 Had ris'n, and came once more to bless mankind.
 I spoke, and friendship's happy voice prevail'd ;
 The people rose, the soldiers stood aghast,
 And dropp'd th' uplifted falchions from their hands ;
 The crowd encircled us, and desp'rate love
 With friendship join'd, fought nobly for Orestes ;
 The joyful people bore him off in triumph :
 Ægisthus flew to seize his destin'd prey,
 And in the slave he meant to punish, found
 A conqueror : pleas'd I saw his humbled pride :
 His friends deserted, and his guards betray'd him :
 Th' insulting people triumph'd in his fall.
 O glorious day ! O all discerning justice !
 Ægisthus wears the chains that bound Orestes ;
 The queen alone attends, protects, and saves him
 From the mad crowd, that press tumultuous on,
 Big with revenge, and thirsting for his blood ;
 Whilst Clytemnæstra holds him in her arms,
 And shields him from their rage, implores Orestes
 To save her husband : he respects her still,
 Fulfils the duties of a son and brother :
 Safe from the foe you will behold him soon
 Triumphant here, a conqueror and a king.

Ipb. Let us away, to greet the lov'd Orestes,
 And comfort our afflicted mother.

Elec. Gods !

What unexpected bliss ! O Pylades,
 Thou best of friends, thou kind protector, haste,
 Let us begone.

Pyl.

Pyl. Take off those shameful bonds. [*To his attendants.*
 Fall from her hands, ye chains, for they were made
 To wield a sceptre. [*They take off her chains.*

S C E N E VIII.

ELECTRA, IPHISA, PYLADES, PAMMENES.

Elec. O Pammenes, where,
 Where's my Orestes, my deliverer ?
 Why comes he not ?

Pam. This is a dreadful moment,
 And full of terror, for his father's spirit
 Demands a sacrifice, and justice waits
 To pay it, so hath heav'n decreed : this tomb
 Must be the altar where the victim's blood
 Shall soon be shed ; that sacred duty done,
 He will attend thee ; but thou must not see
 A sight so terrible : thou know'st the laws
 Of Argos suffer not thy spotless hands
 To join with his, ere the appointed time.

Ipb. But say, Pammenes, what of Clytemnæstra ?
 How acts she in this dreadful crisis ?

Pam. Vainly
 She deprecates the wrath of fierce Orestes,
 And strives to save Ægisthus ; kneels for pardon,
 And craves that boon she never will obtain :
 Meantime the Furies, deaf to her intreaties,
 And thirsting for the cruel murth'rer's blood,
 Throng round Orestes, and demand his life.

Ipb. O may this day of terror be a day
 Of pardon and forgiveness ; may it finish
 The cruel woes of our unhappy race !
 Hark, Pylades ! Electra, heard ye not
 A dreadful groan ?

Elec. My mother's sure.

Pam. 'Tis she.

Clyt. O spare me !

[*Behind the scenes.*

Ipb. Heav'n !

Clyt. My son !

[*Behind the scenes.*

Elec.

Elec. He kills *Ægisthus*.

O hear her not, *Orestes*, but go on,
Revenge, revenge, dissolve the horrid tie,
And sacrifice the murth'rer in her arms:
Strike deep.

Clyt. My son! O, thou hast slain thy mother.

Pyl. O cruel fate!

Ipb. O guilt!

Elec. O wretched brother!

Crimes punish crimes; for ever be this day
Lamented by us!

S C E N E the LAST.

To them ORESTES.

Ores. Open wide, thou earth,
And swallow me; O *Clytemnæstra*, *Atreus*,
And *Tantalus*, I come, I follow you
To *Erebus*, a part'ner in your crimes,
To share your tortures.

Elec. O what hast thou done?

Ores. She strove to save him, and I smote them both—
I can no more——

Elec. She fell then by thy hand!
O dreadful stroke! and cou'd'st thou——

Ores. 'Twas not I;
'Twas not *Orestes*; some malignant pow'r
Guided my hand, the hateful instrument
Of heav'n's eternal wrath: *Orestes* lives
But to be wretched: banish'd from my country,
When my dear father fell; my mother slain,
And by my hand; an exile from the world,
Bereft of parents, country, fortune, friends,
Now must I wander: all is lost to me:
O thou bright orb, thou ever glorious sun,
Shocked at our crimes, and *Atreus*' horrid feast,
Thou didst withdraw thy beams, and yet thou shin'st.
On me! O wherefore in eternal night.

Dost:

Dost thou not bury all ? O tyrant gods,
Merciless pow'rs, who punish'd me for guilt
Yourselfes commanded, O for what new crime
Am I reserv'd ? Speak—ye pronounce the name
Of Tauris, there I'll seek the murth'rous priestess,
Who offers blood alone to th' angry gods,
To gods less cruel, less unjust than you.

Elec. Stay, and conjure their justice and their hate.

Pyl. Where'er the gods may lead, thy Pylades
Shall follow still, and friendship triumph o'er
The woes of mortals, and the wrath of heav'n.

END of the FIFTH and LAST ACT.



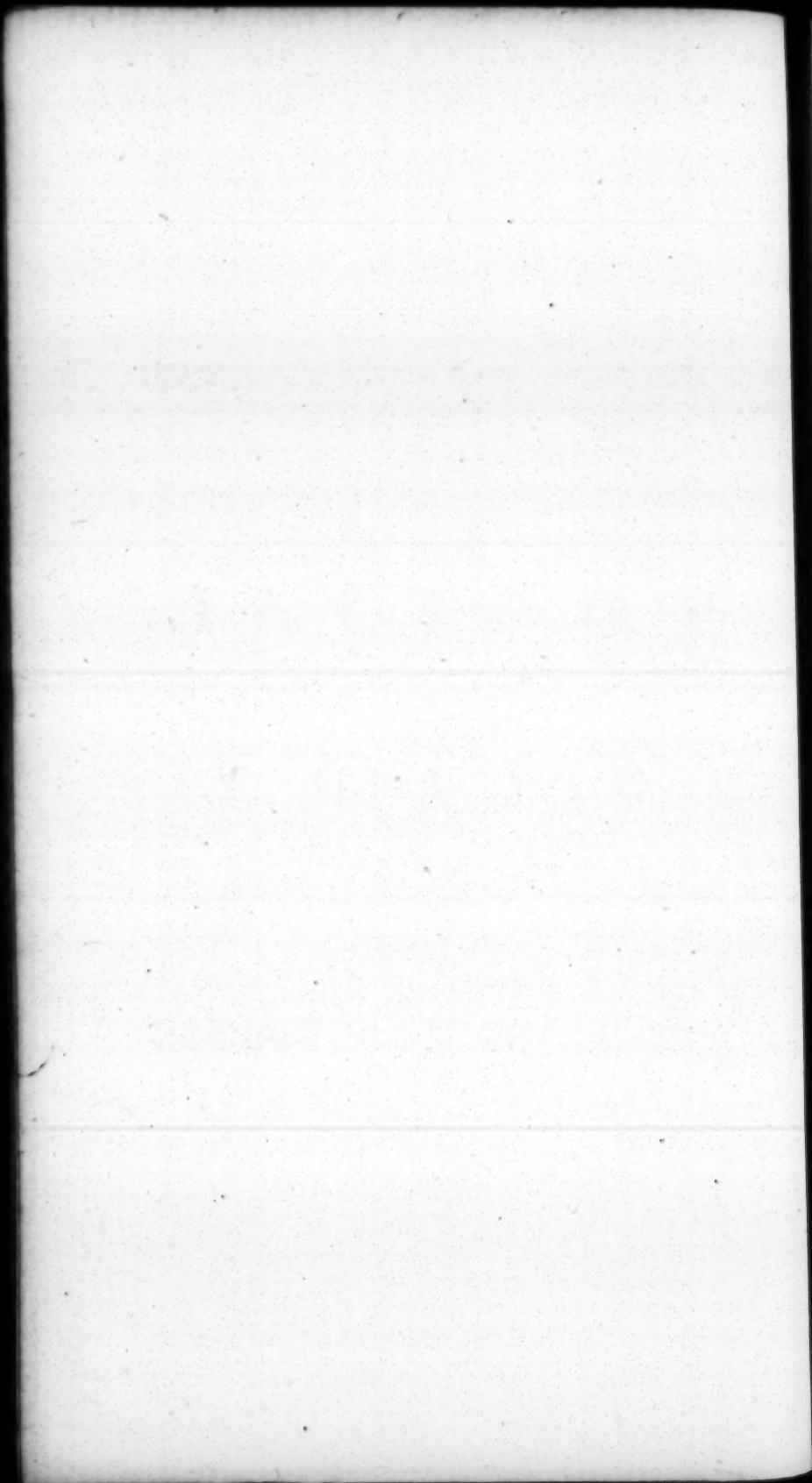




THE
P R O D I G A L.
A
C O M E D Y.

Represented Oct. 10th, 1736.







T H E

E D I T O R ' S

P R E F A C E

To the Edition printed in 1735.

IT is pretty extraordinary, that this comedy shou'd never yet have made its appearance in print, as it is now almost two years since it was first play'd, and ran about thirty nights: as the author of it was not known, it has hitherto been attributed to several persons of the first character; but it was indisputably written by Mr. de *Voltaire*, though the stile of the *Henriade* and *Alzira* are so extremely different from the stile of this, that we cannot easily conceive them to be the product of the same pen.

In his name we have here presented it to the public, as the first comedy ever written in * verses
con-

* It is astonishing that it should ever enter into the head of a Dramatic writer to put his comedies into rhyme; but it is still more astonishing that the sensible and ingenious *Voltaire* should adopt a custom so ridiculous: the confining his verses to five feet, has certainly nothing but the novelty to recommend it; they are even
perhaps

consisting of five feet ; a novelty which may perhaps induce other authors to make use of this measure : it will at least be productive of variety on the French theatre, and whoever gives us new pleasures, has always a right to a favourable reception.

If comedy should be an exact representation of manners, this piece has sufficient merit to recommend it : we see in the *Prodigal* a mixture of the serious and pleasant ; the comic, and the affecting : thus the life of man itself is always chequer'd, and sometimes even a single incident will produce all these contrasts. Nothing more common than a family, wherein the father grumbles, the daughter, who is in love, whimpers, the son laughs at them both, and the relations take different parts as it happens to suit their inclinations ; we often make a joke of that in one room, which we cry at in the next : nay, the same person has often laughed and cried at the same thing within a quarter of an hour.

A certain lady of fashion, being one day at the bedside of her daughter, who lay dangerously ill, with all the family about her, burst into a flood of tears, and cried out, *O my God, my God, restore me my dear daughter, and take all my other children* : a gentleman, who had married one of her

perhaps more faulty than if they had fifteen, by the quicker return of the same sounds to our ear. What pleasure a French author, or a French audience, might take in them, we cannot pretend to determine ; but they are certainly very perplexing to a translator, who finds it extremely difficult to reduce poetic language, and high flown metaphors, to easy and familiar dialogue, without departing too much from the original. The English reader will frequently, I am afraid, meet with a stiffness of style in this comedy, which, with all the pains I have taken, it was impossible to avoid : add to this, that the names of *Fierensat*, *Lise*, *Martba*, &c. sound but uncouthly to us ; and to change them, was a liberty which I thought a translator had no right to take.

her daughters, came up to her immediately, and taking her by the sleeve, *Pray madam*, says he, *do you include your sons in law?* The arch dryness with which he spoke those words had such an effect on the afflicted lady, that she burst into a loud laugh, and went out; the company followed her, and laughed too; and the sick person, as soon as she heard the cause of their mirth, laughed more heartily than all the rest.

We don't mean to infer from this, that every comedy should have some scenes of humour and drollery, and others serious and affecting: there are a great many good pieces where there is nothing but gaiety, others intirely serious; others where they are mixed, and others where the tender and pathetic are carried so far as to produce tears. Neither of these different species should be excluded from the stage; and if I was to be asked, which is the best of them, I should say, that which was best executed.

It would perhaps be agreeable to the present taste for *reasoning*, and not unsuitable to this occasion, to examine here, what kind of pleasantry that is which makes us laugh in a comedy. The cause of laughter is one of those things which are easier felt than expressed: the admirable *Moliere*, *Regnard*, who is sometimes almost as admirable as *Moliere*, and the authors of several excellent *petites pieces*, have contented themselves with raising this pleasing sensation without explaining to us the reasons of it, or telling their secret.

I have observed, with regard to the stage, that violent peals of universal laughter seldom rise but from some *mistake*. *Mercury* taken for *Sofia*; *Menechmes* for his brother; *Crispin* making his own will under the name of the old master *Geronte*; *Valere* talking to *Harpagon* of the beauty of his daughter,

daughter, whilst *Harpagon* imagines he is talking of the beauty of his strong box; *Pourceaugnac*, when they feel his pulse, and want to make him pass for a madman: in a word, mistakes of this kind are generally the only things that excite laughter: *Harlequin* seldom raises a smile, except when he makes some blunder: and this accounts for the propriety of the name of *Balourd*, usually given to him.

There are a great many other species of the comic, and pleasantries, that cause a different sort of entertainment; but I never saw what we call laughing from the bottom of one's soul, either on the stage, or in company, except in cases nearly resembling those which I just now mentioned: there are several ridiculous characters which please, without causing that immoderate laughter of joy. *Trissotin* and *Vadius*, for example, are of this kind: the *Gamester*, and the *Grumbler* likewise, give us inexpressible pleasure, but never cause any bursts of laughter.

There are besides other characters of ridicule, that have in them a mixture of vice, which we love to see well painted, though they only us a serious pleasure: a bad man will never make us laugh, because laughter always arises from a gaiety of disposition, absolutely incompatible with contempt and indignation: it is true, indeed, we laugh *Tratuffe*, but not at his hypocrisy; it is at the mistake of the good old gentleman, who takes him for a saint: the hypocrisy once discover'd, we laugh no longer, but feel very different impressions.

One might easily trace the spring of every other sentiment, and shew the cause of gaiety, curiosity, interest, emotion, and tears. It would be a proper employment for some of our dramatic authors

to lay open these secret springs, as they are the persons who put them in motion; but they are too busy in moving the passions, to find time for an examination into them: they know that one sentiment is worth a hundred definitions, and I am too much of their opinion to prefix a treatise of philosophy to a dramatic performance: I shall content myself with only insisting a little on the necessity we are under of having something new. If we had never brought any thing into the tragic scene but the Roman grandeur, it would have grown at least very disgustful; and if our heroes had breathed nothing but love and tenderness, we should by this time have been heartily sick of them:

O imitatores, servum pecus!

The works which we have seen since the times of *Corneille*, *Moliere*, *Racine*, *Quinault*, *Lulli*, and *le Brun*, seem to me all of them to have something new and original, which has saved them from contempt and oblivion: once more therefore I repeat it, every species is good, but that which tires us: we should never therefore say, such a piece of music did not succeed, such a picture was not agreeable, such a play was damn'd, because it was of a new kind; but such or such a thing failed, because it was really good for nothing.

DRAMA-

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Old EUPHEMON.

Young EUPHEMON.

FIERENFAT, President of Cognac, second son
of Euphemon.

RONDON, a Citizen of Cognac.

LISE, Daughter of Rondon.

MARTHA, Chambermaid to Lise.

JASMIN, Valet to young Euphemon.

SCENE, COGNAC.



T H E

P R O D I G A L :

A

C O M E D Y.

A C T I. S C E N E I.

EUPHEMON, RONDON.

Ron. **C**OME, come, cheer up, my old melancholy friend, how happy will it make me to see you merry again ! and merry we will be : what a pleasure it is to think my daughter will revive your drooping family ! But this same son of ours, this master Fierenfat, seems to me to behave strangely in the affair.

Eup. How so !

Ron. Puff'd up with his Presidentship, he makes love by weight and measure : a young fellow putting on the grey-beard, and dictating to us like a Cato, is, in my opinion, a mighty ridiculous animal ; I would prefer a fool to a coxcomb at any time ; in short, brother, he is too proud, and self-sufficient.

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I

Eup.

Eup. And let me tell you, brother, you are a little too hasty.

Ron. I can't help it; 'tis my nature: I love truth, I love to hear it, and I love to speak it: I love now and then to reprove my son-in-law, to rate him for his comical pedantic airs: to be sure, you acted like a wise father, to turn your eldest son out of doors; that gamester, that wild rake-helly profligate, to make room for this prudent younger brother; to place all your hopes on this promising youth, and buy a presidentship for him. O 'twas a wise act no doubt: but the moment he became Mr. President, by my troth, he was stuff'd up with vanity and impertinence: he goes like clock-work, walks and talks in time, and says he has a great deal more wit than I have; who, you know, brother, have a great deal more than you: he is——

Eup. Nay, nay, what a strange humour this is! must you always be——

Ron. Well, well, no matter; what does it signify? all these faults are nothing when people are rich: he is, as I was going to say, covetous, and every covetous man is wise: O 'tis a excellent vice for a husband, a most delightful vice. Come, come, this very day he must be my son-in law; Life shall be his: it only remains now, my dear sorrowful friend, that you make over all your goods and chattels, hereditary or acquired, present and future, to your son, only reserving to yourself a moderate income: let every thing be sign'd and sealed as soon as possible, that this same young gentleman of your's may throw a good fortune into our laps, without which my daughter will most certainly look another way for a husband.

Eup. I have promis'd you, Sir, and I will keep my word: yes, Fierenfat shall have every thing I am possess'd of: the sad remainder of my unhappy life shall glide away silently in some distant retreat: but I cannot help wishing that one, for whom I design my all, was less eager to enjoy it: I have seen the mad debauchery of one son, and now behold with concern the soul of the other devoted to interest.

Ron.

Ron. So much the better, man, so much the better.

Eup. O my dear friend, I was born to be an unfortunate father.

Ron. Let me have none of your lamentation, your sighs, and your groans : what ! do you want your eldest hopeful to come back, that prodigal spendthrift, to spoil all our pleasure at once, and drop in like a trouble-feast on the day of marriage ?

Eup. No : no.

Ron. Wou'd you have him come, and swear the house down ?

Eup. No.

Ron. Beat you, and run away with my daughter, with my dear Life ; my Life, who——

Eup. Long may that charming maid be preserv'd from such wicked fellows !

Ron. Do you want him to come again to plunder his father ? Do you want to give him your estate ?

Eup. No : no : his brother shall have it all.

Ron. Ay ! or my daughter will have none of him.

Eup. To day he shall have Life, and all my fortune : his brother will have nothing of me but the anger of a father, whom he hath grievously injured : he has deserved my hatred ; an unnatural boy !

Ron. Indeed you bore with him too long ; the other at least has acted with discretion : but as for him, he was a profligate : my God, what a libertine ! Don't you remember, ha ! ha ! ha ! that was a droll trick enough, when he robb'd you of your cloaths, horses, linen, and moveables, to equip his little *Jourdain*, who left him the very next morning. Many a time have I laugh'd at that, I own.

Eup. O ! what pleasure can you find in repeating my misfortunes ?

Ron. And then his staking twenty rouleaus upon an ace ; O dear ! O dear !

Eup. Have done with this.

Ron. Don't you remember, when he was to have been betroth'd to my little Life, in the face of the church, where he had hid himself, and upon whose account too ?——the debauch'd rogue !

Eup. Spare me the remembrance, good Rondon, of these unhappy circumstances, that only set his conduct in the worst light: am I not already unfortunate enough? I left my own house, the place of my nativity, on purpose to remove as far as possible from my thoughts the memory of a misfortune, which, whenever it recurs, distracts me. Your business led you to this place; we have enter'd into a connection with and friendship for each other; let me intreat you, Rondon, make the proper use of it. You are always repeating truths of some kind or other; but let me tell you, truth is not always agreeable.

Ron. Well, well, it is agreed; I say no more; I ask pardon; but sure the devil was in you, when you knew his violent temper, to make a soldier of him.

Eup. Again!

Ron. Forgive me, but really you ought——

Eup. I know it: I know I ought to forget every thing but my youngest son, and his marriage: but tell me, sincerely, Rondon, think you he has been able to gain your daughter's heart?

Ron. O no doubt of it: my girl is a girl of honour, and will be obedient to her father: if I tell her she must fall in love, her little docile heart, which I can turn and wind just as I please, falls in love immediately, without any arguing about the matter: I know how to manage her, I warrant you.

Eup. I have, notwithstanding, some doubts about her obedience in this affair, and am greatly mistaken if she answers your expectation: my eldest son had a place in her affections: I know how strong the first impressions of love are upon a tender heart; they are not worn out in a day; indeed, my friend, they are not.

Ron. Nonsense, nonsense.

Eup. Say what you please, that wild fellow knew how to be agreeable.

Ron. Not he indeed: he was nobody: a poor creature: no, no: never you fear that: after his behaviour to you, I bade my daughter never to think of him any more; therefore set your heart at rest. When I say no, who shall dare to say yes? But you shall see, here she comes.

SCENE

SCENE II.

EUPHEMON, RONDON, LISE, MARTHA.

Ron. Come hither, my dear: this day, my dear, is a grand holiday for you, I'm sure; for this day I intend to give you a husband: now tell me, my little Lise, be he old or young, handsome or ugly, grave or gay, rich or poor, shall not you have the strongest desire to please him? Have not you already an inclination for him? Are not you in love with him?

Lise. No, Sir.

Ron. How, gipsy—

Eup. O ho! my liege: why your power is a little on the decline. What is become of your despotic authority!

Ron. Ha! how is this! what, after all I said to you, have you no passion for your future husband? no inclination? no——

Lise. None in the least, Sir.

Ron. Don't you know your duty obliges you to give him your whole heart?

Lise. No, Sir; I tell you, no. I know, Sir, how far a heart, obedient to the dictates of virtue, is oblig'd by the solemn tie of marriage. I know, Sir, it is a wife's duty to make herself as aimable as possible, and to endeavour to deserve a husband's tenderness; to make amends by goodness for what she wants in beauty; abroad, to be discreet and prudent; at home, affable and agreeable; but, as for love, 'tis quite another thing: it will not endure slavery: inclination can never be forc'd, therefore never attempt it: to my husband I shall yield up every thing—but my heart, and that he must deserve before he can possess it: depend upon it, that heart will never be taught to love by the command of a father; no, nor be argued into it by reason, nor frighten'd into it by a lawyer.

Eup. In my opinion, the girl talks sensibly, and I approve the justice of her argument: my son, I hope, will

endeavour to make himself worthy of a heart so noble and so generous.

Ron. Hold your tongue, you old doting flatterer, you corrupter of youth: without your encouragement, the girl would never have thought of prating to me in this ridiculous manner. [To Life.]

Hark, ye, Miss, I have provided you a husband, perhaps he may have a little of the coxcomb, and take upon him rather too much; but it is my business to correct my son-in-law, and yours to take him, such as he is: to love one another as well as you can, and obey me in every thing, that's all you have to do: and now, brother, let us go sign and seal with my scrivener, who will give us a hundred words where four would be sufficient: come, let us away, and rattle the old brawler: then will I come back, and scold my son, and your daughter, and yourself.

Eup. Mighty well, Sir: come along.

S C E N E III.

LISE, MARTHA.

Mar. My god! what an odd mixture it is! how strangely the old gentleman jumbles his ideas together!

Life. I am his daughter still; and his odd humours, after all, don't alter the goodness of his heart. Under this violence of passion, and air of resentment, he has still the soul of a father; nay, sometimes, even in the midst of his freaks, and whilst he is scolding me, he will take my advice: to be sure, when he finds fault with the husband he has provided for me, and tells me of the hazard I run in such a marriage, he is but too much in the right: but when, at the same time, he lays his commands on me to love him, then indeed he is most miserably wrong.

Mar. How is it possible you should ever love this Monf. Fierenfat? I'd sooner marry an old soldier, that swears,

swears, gets drunk, beats his wife, and yet loves her, than a coxcomb of the long robe, fond of nobody but himself; who, with a grave tone and pedantic air, talks to his wife as if he was examining her in a court of justice; a peacock that's always looking at his own tail, who bridles under his band, and admires himself; a wretch who has even more covetousness than pride, and makes love to you as he counts out his money.

Life. Thou hast painted him to the life; but what can I do? I must submit to this marriage: we are not the disposers of our own fate: my parents, my fortune, my age, all conspire to force me into the bonds of wedlock. This Fierenfat, in spite of my dislike of him, is the only man here who can be my husband: he is the son of my father's friend, and I can't possibly shake him off. Alas! how few hearts are bestow'd according to our own inclinations! I must yield: time and patience perhaps may conquer my disgust of him; I may reconcile myself to the yoke, and come at last to pass over his faults as I do my own.

Mar. Mighty well resolv'd indeed, my beautiful and discreet mistress: but your heart, I am afraid, is not quite so open.—O if I dar'd—but you have forbade my ever mentioning—

Life. Whom?

Mar. Euphemon—who, spite of all his vices, I know, had once an int'rest in your heart; who lov'd you.

Life. O never, never: mention no more a name which I detest.

Mar. Well, well, I say no more about him. [*Going off.*]

Life. It is true, [*Pulling her back.*] his youth did for a little time betray me into a tenderness for him; but was he form'd to make a virtuous woman happy?

Mar. A dangerous fool indeed, madam. [*Going.*]

Life. He met with too many corrupters to lead him astray, [*Pulling her back.*] unhappy youth! he took his round of pleasures but knew little, I believe, of love.

Mar. And yet there was a time when you seem'd to think you had caught him in the toils.

Life. If he had really lov'd, it might have reform'd him; for, believe me, a real passion, without disguise, is

the best curb on vice ; and he, who feels it, either is a worthy man, or soon will be so : but Euphemon despis'd his mistress, left love and tenderness for folly and debauchery. Those worthless villains, who pretended to be his friends, and drew him into the snare, after having exhausted all his mother's fortune, robb'd his unhappy father, and laid it upon him : to complete his misery, those vile seducers took him away from his father's protection, and snatch'd him from me ; hid him for ever from these eyes, which, bath'd in tears, still lament his vices and his charms. I think no more about him.

Mar. His brother, it seems, succeeds to his fortunes, and is to marry you ; more's the pity, I say : t'other had a fine face, fair hair, a good leg, danc'd well, sung well, in short, was born for love.

Lise. What are you talking of ?

Mar. Even in the midst of all his freaks and follies, all his strange conduct, one might see a fund of honour in his heart.

Lise. There was ; he seem'd form'd for virtue.

Mar. Don't think, madam, I mean to flatter him : but to do him justice, he was not mean, nor servile ; no railer, no sharper, no liar.

Lise. No, but——

Mar. Away : here comes his brother.

Lise. Nay : we must stay now, it is too late to get off.

SCENE IV.

LISE, MARTHA, FIERENFAT the President.

Fie. To be sure, madam, this augmentation of fortune must make the match more agreeable : increase of riches is increase of happiness, and, as I may say, the very soul of house-keeping : fortune, honour, and dignity, will not be wanting to the wife of Mons. Fierenfat. At Cognac, madam, you will have the precedency of the first ladies of the Beau-monde : let me tell you, madam, no little satisfaction : you will hear them
whispering

whispering as you go along, there she goes, madame la Presidente: really, madam, when I reflect upon my rank, my riches, the privileges of my high office, and all the good qualities I possess, altogether with my right of eldership, which will be made over to me, I assure you, madam, I pay you no small compliment.

Mar. Now, for my part, I am of another opinion: always to be talking of your quality, your rank, and your riches, is extremely ridiculous: a Midas and Narcissus at once, blown up with pride, and contracted with avarice; always looking at yourself and your money; a petit-maitre with a band on; the most unnatural of all human creatures: a young coxcomb may pass off, but a young miser is—a monster.

Fie. I believe, sweet-heart, it is not you whom I am to marry to-day, but this lady; therefore, you will please, madam, to trouble your head no more about us; silence will become you best.

[Turning to Life.

You, madam, I hope, who in an hour or two are to be my wife, will, I hope, favour me so far as, before night, to dismiss this blustering body-guard of yours, who makes use of a chamber-maid's privilege to give a loose to her impertinence: but I would have her know I am not a President for nothing, and may, perhaps, lock her up for her own good.

Mar. Speak to him, madam, and defend me: if he locks me up, he may lock you up too, for aught I know.

[To Life..

Life. I wish he does not indeed.

[Aside..

Mar. Speak to him then, and don't mutter.

Life. What can I say to him?

Mar. Abuse him.

Life. No: I'll reason with him.

Mar. That will never do, take my word for it; 'tother's the better way.

SCENE VI.

RONDON to LISE, &c.

Ron. Upon my word, a pleasant affair this.

Fie. What's the matter?

Ron. You shall hear. As I was tramping to your old gentleman with the parchments, I met him at the foot of this rock, talking with a traveller who had just lit out of a coach.

Lise. A young traveller?

Ron. No: a toothless old fellow, leaning on a crutch. I observ'd them rubbing their grey beards against each other for some time, shrugging up their humpbacks, and sighing most piteously; then they turn'd up the whites of their eyes, and fell o'sniveling together: at last Euphemon, with a crabbed face, told me, he had met with a great calamity, that at least he must have time to weep before he cou'd sign the articles, and at that time cou'd not talk to any body.

Fie. O! I must go myself and comfort him: you know I can manage him as I please; besides, the affair is really my own concern; but as soon as he sees me with the contract in my hand, he will sign immediately: Time is precious, and my new right of eldership a matter of importance.

Lise. There is no hurry, sir, you need not be so impatient

Ron. But I say he shall be in a hurry: all this is your doing, madam.

Lise. How, Sir! mine!

Ron. Yes, your's, Madam. All the crosses and disappointments that make families unhappy, come from undutiful daughters.

Lise. What have I done, Sir, to disoblige you?

Ron. What have you done! turn'd every thing topsyturvy: put us all in confusion: but I'll let these two wise-acres lay their heads together a little, and then marry you off in spite of their teeth; in spite of yourself too, if you provoke me.

ACT



ACT II. SCENE I.

LISE, MARTHA.

Mar. **I** See this matrimony frightens you a little: this noise and bustle of preparation has something terrible in it.

Lise. To say the truth, so it has; and the more I think on the weight of this yoke, the more this heart of mine trembles at it. Marriage, in my opinion, is the greatest good, or the greatest evil; there is no such thing as a medium in it: where hearts are united, where harmony of sentiment, taste, and humour strengthen the bonds of nature, where love forms the tie, and honour gives a sanction to it, it is surely the happiest state which mortals can enjoy. What pleasure must it be to own our passion publicly, to bear the name of the dear beloved object of our wishes! your house, your servants, your livery, every thing carrying with it some pleasing remembrance of the man we love; and then to see our children, those dear pledges of mutual affection, that form, as it were, another union: O! such a marriage is a heaven upon earth: but to make a vile contract, to sell our name, our fortune, and our liberty, and submit them to the will of an arbitrary tyrant, and be only his first slave, an upper servant in his family; to be eternally jarring, or running away from one another, the day without joy, and the night without love; to be always afraid of doing what we should not do; to give way to our own bad inclinations, or be continually opposing them; to be under the necessity either of deceiving an imperious husband, or dragging out life in a languid state of troublesome duty and obedience; to mutter, and fret, and pine away with grief and discontent; O! such a marriage is the hell of this world.

Mar.

Mar. The young ladies of this age have certainly, they say, some little dæmon, some familiar, to inspire them! Why, what a deal of knowledge this girl has pick'd up in so short time! the most expert, artful widow in Paris, that ever comforted herself with the thought of having bury'd three husbands, could not have talk'd more learnedly on this head than my young mistress here: but we must have a little eclaircissement, with regard to this marriage, which it seems is so mighty disgustful: you don't approve of Mons. le President, pray how should you like his brother? Come, unriddle the mystery to me. Has not the elder brother supplanted the younger? Come, who do you love, or who do you hate? Tell me the truth at once, and speak honestly.

Lise. I know nothing about it: I cannot, dare not tell you the cause of my dislike. Why would you search for a melancholy truth at the bottom of a heart already but too deeply afflicted? We can never see ourselves in the water, whilst the tempest is howling round us: no; first let the storm be hush'd, the wind calm, and the surface smooth.

Mar. Comparisons, Madam, will never pass for argument: it is easy enough: sometimes to see the bottom of a heart, it's clear enough: and if the passions are now and then a little tempestuous, a young lady of understanding can generally guess from what corner the wind blows that has rais'd the storm. She knows well enough——

Lise. I tell you, I know nothing; and I am resolv'd to shut my eyes, and see nothing. I would not wish to know, whether I am still weak enough to retain a passion for a wretch, whom I ought to abhor, nor would I encrease my disgust for one man by regretting the charms of another. No: let the false Euphemon live happy, and content, if he can be so; but let him not be disinherited; never will I be so cruel and inhuman as to make myself his sister on purpose to ruin and destroy him. Now you know my heart; search into it no further, unless you mean to tear it in pieces.

SCENE

SCENE II.

LISE, MARTHA, a SERVANT.

Ser. Madam, the baroness of Croupillac waits below.

Lise. Her visit astonishes me!

Ser. She is just arriv'd from Angouleme, and comes to pay her respects to you.

Lise. Upon what occasion?

Mar. O, upon your marriage, no doubt.

Lise. The very subject I would wish to avoid. Am I in a condition to listen to a heap of ridiculous compliments, a register of common-place cant and hypocrisy, that tires one to death; where common sense is murder'd by the perpetual exercise of talking, without saying any thing? What a task have I to go through!

SCENE III.

LISE, Mad. CROUPILLAC, MARTHA.

Mar. Here her ladyship comes.

Lise. Ay, I see her but too well.

Mar. They say she wants vastly to be marry'd, is apt to be a little quarrelsome, and almost in her dotage.

Lise. Some chairs here. Madam, you will pardon me if——

M. de Croup. O Madam!

Lise. Madam!

M. de Croup. I, Madam, must likewise beg—

Lise. Pray be seated.

M. de Croup. Upon my word, Madam, I am quite confounded, and wish, from the bottom of my soul, it was in my power to—

[*Sitting down.*]

Lise. Madam!

M. de Croup. Yes, Madam, I heartily wish I could steal your charms; it makes me weep to see you so handsome.

Lise.

Life. Pray, Madam, be comforted.

M. de Croup. No, madam, that's impossible. I see, my dear, you may have as many husbands as you please. I had one too, at least I thought so; only one, and that's a melancholy consideration; and trouble enough I had to get him too, and you are going to rob me of him. There is a time, Madam, O dear! how soon that time comes about! when, if a lover deserts us, we lose our all, and one is quite left alone: and let me tell you, Madam, it is very cruel to take away all from one, that has little or nothing left.

Life. You must excuse me, Madam, but I am really astonish'd both at your visit, and your conversation: what accident pray has afflicted you so? whom have you lost, or whom have I robb'd you of?

M. de Croup. My dear child, there are a great many wrinkled old fools, who fancy that, by the help of paint and a few false teeth, they can stop the course of time and pleasure, and fix wandering love; but, to my sorrow, I am a little wiser: I see too plainly that every thing is running away, and I can't bear it.

Life. I am sorry for it, Madam, if it be so; but I can't possibly make you young again.

M. de Croup. I know it; but I have still some hopes: perhaps to restore my false one to me, might, in some measure, give me fresh youth and beauty.

Life. What false one do you mean?

M. de Croup. My ungrateful, cruel, husband, whom I have run after so long; and little worthy he is of all my care. The President, Madam.

Life. The President!

M. de Croup. Yes, Madam: when Croupillac was in her bloom, she would not have talk'd to Presidents; their persons, their manners, their every thing, was my aversion: but as we grow old, we are not quite so difficult.

Life. And so, Madam——

M. de Croup. And so, Madam, in short, you have reduced me to a state of misery and despair.

Life. I, Madam? how? by what means?

M. de

M. de Croup. I'll tell you. I liv'd, you must know, at Angoulême, and, as a widow, had the free disposal of my person: there, at that very time, was Fierenfat, a student, a President's 'prentice, you understand me: he ogled me for a long time, and took it into his head to be most villainously in love with me. Villainously, I say, most horrid and abominable; for what did he make love to? my money. I got some people to write to the old gentleman, who interested themselves too far in the affair, and talk'd to him in my name: he returned in answer, that he would—consider of it: so you see the thing was settled.

Life. O yes.

M. de Croup. For my part, I had no objection: his elder brother was at that time, so I was inform'd, engaged to you.

Life. Cruel remembrance!

[*Aside.*

M. de Croup. He was a foolish fellow, my dear; but had then the honour to be in your good graces.

Life. Ha! ha!

[*Sighing.*

M. de Croup. This silly fellow, my dear, as I was telling you, being quite out at elbows, kick'd out of doors by his father, and wandering about the wide world, dead, perhaps, by this time, (you seem concern'd) my college hero, my President, knowing extremely well that your fortune was, upon the whole, much better than mine, has thought fit to laugh at my disappointment, and go in quest of your superior—portion. But do you think, Madam, to run in this manner from brother to brother, and engross a whole family to yourself? I do here most solemnly enter my protest against it: I forbid the banns: I'll venture my whole estate, my dow'ry, and every thing; in short, the cause shall be so managed, that you, his father, my children, all of us shall be dead, before ever it is put an end to.

Life. I assure you, Madam, with the utmost sincerity, I am very sorry that my marriage should make you miserable: I am sure, however, you have no reason to be angry with me; but I find we may make others jealous without being happy ourselves: look no longer, Madam, I beseech you, with an eye of envy on my condition;

condition; he is a husband I shall not quarrel with you for.

M. de Croup. Not quarrel for him?

Lise. No: I'll give him up to you with all my heart.

M. de Croup. You have no taste then for his person? you don't love him?

Lise. I see very few charms in matrimony, and none at all in a law suit; and so, madam—

SCENE IV.

M. de CROUPILLAC, LISE, RONDON.

Ron. So, so, daughter, here's fine work; protests, declarations, and law-suits, enough to make one's hair stand an end. Ouns! shall Rondon be talk'd to thus? but I'll ferret them out, the impertinent rascals.

M. de Croup. Must I suffer more indignities! Hear me, Mr. Rondon.

Ron. What wou'd you have, madam?

M. de Croup. Your son-in-law, sir, is a false villain, a coxcomb of a new species, a gallant, and a miser, a widow-hunter, a fellow that loves nothing but money.

Ron. He's in the right of it.

M. de Croup. In my own house he has a thousand times vow'd eternal constancy to me.

Ron. Promises of that kind, Madam, are very seldom kept.

M. de Croup. And then to leave me so basely.

Ron. I believe I shou'd have done the same.

M. de Croup. But I shall talk to his father in a proper manner.

Ron. I'd rather you wou'd talk to him than to me.

M. de Croup. 'Tis a wicked thing, so it is; and the whole sex will take my part, and cry out shame upon him.

Ron. They can't cry louder than yourself.

M. de Croup. I'll make the world know how they should treat a baroness.

Ron. I'll tell you how: laugh at her.

M. de

M. de Croup. A husband, look ye, I must have ; and I will take him, or his old father, or you.

Ron. Me ?

M. de Croup. Yes, you.

Ron. I defy you.

M. de Croup. We'll try it : I'll go to law with you.

Ron. Ridiculous.

SCENE V.

RONDON, FIERENFAT, LISE.

Ron. Pray, Madam, what's the reason you receive such visitors in my house ? you are always bringing me into some scrape or other —

[*To Lise.*

And you, Sir, you Mr. King of Pedants, what nonsensical dæmon inspir'd you with the thought of courting a baroness, only to laugh at and abuse her ? A pretty scheme, indeed, with that flat face of your's, to give yourself the airs of a flighty young coxcomb ; with that grave sorrowful countenance to play the gallant : it might have become the rake your brother : but for you—fy ! fy !

[*To Fierenfat.*

Fier. My dear father-in-law, don't be misled : I never was desirous of this match ; I only promis'd her conditionally, and always reserved to myself the right of taking a richer wife, if I cou'd get one : the disinheriting my elder brother, and coming into immediate possession of his fortune, have given me pretensions to your daughter—come, come, money makes the best matches.

Ron. So it does, my boy ; there you're in the right.

Lise. Now that right I take to be quite wrong.

Ron. Psha ! psha ! money does every thing, that's certain ; let us therefore settle the affair immediately : sixty good sacks full of French crowns will set every thing right, in spite of all the Croupillacs in the universe. How this Euphemon makes me wait ! I'm out of all patience ; but let us sign before he comes.

Lise. No, Sir, there I enter my caveat : I will only submit on certain conditions.

Ron.

Ron. Conditions! impertinence! you pretend to say—

Life. I say, Sir, what I think: can we ever taste, can we enjoy that guilty happiness, which springs from another's misery? and you, Sir, [*to Fierensfat*] can you in your prosperity forget that you have a brother?

Fier. A brother! I never saw him in my life: he was gone from home when I was at college, hard at my Cujatius and Bartole. I've heard, indeed, of his pranks since; and, if he ever comes back again, we know what we have to do, never fear that; we shall send him off to the gallies.

Life. A brotherly and a christian resolution! In the mean time you'll confiscate his estate; that, I suppose, is your intention: but I tell you, Sir, I detest and abhor the project.

Ron. Heigh! heigh! very fine: but come, my dear, the contract is drawn, and the lawyer has taken care of all that.

Fier. Our forefathers have determined concerning this matter; consult the written law: let me see, in Cujatius, chapter the fifth, sixth, and seventh, we read thus. "Every debauch'd libertine that leaves his father's house, or pillages the same, shall, *ipso facto*, be dispossessed of every thing, and disinherited as a bastard."

Life. I know nothing about laws or precedents, nor have ever read Cujatius; but will venture to pronounce, that they are a set of vile unfeeling wretches, foes to common sense and without humanity, who say a brother should let a brother perish: nature and honour have their rights to plead, that are more powerful than Cujatius and all your laws.

Ron. Come, come, let's have none of your codes, and your honour, and your nonsense; but do as I'd have you: what's all this fuss about an elder brother? there shou'd be money.

Life. There shou'd be virtue, sir: let him be punish'd; but leave him at least something to subsist on, the poor remains of an elder brother's right: in a word, sir, I must tell you, my hand shall never be purchased at the price of his ruin: blot out therefore that article in the contract

contract which I abhor, and which would be a disgrace to us all : if lucrative views induced you to draw it up thus, it is a shame and a dishonour to us, and therefore I desire it may be expunged.

Fier. How very little women know of business !

Ron. What ! you want to correct two attorneys at law, and make a contract void : O lud ! O lud !

Life. Why not ?

Ron. You'll never make a good housewife ; you'll let every thing go to rack and ruin.

Life. At present, fir, I cannot boast my knowledge of the world, or of œconomy ; but I will maintain it, the love of money destroys more families than it supports ; and if ever I have a house of my own, the foundation of it shall be laid on—justice.

Ron. She is light-headed ; but let us humour her a little : come, give him a little matter, and the business will be over.

Fier. Ay, ay, well—I give to my brother—ay, I give him—come along.

Ron. Not a single farthing.

SCENE VI.

EUPHEMON, RONDON, LISE, FIERENFAT.

Ron. O ! here comes the old gentleman. Well, I have brought my daughter to reason ; we want nothing now but your hand to the contract. Come, come, let's have no more delays, cheer up, put on your jovial countenance, your wedding looks, man ; for in nine months time, I'll lay my life, two thumping boys—come, come, let us laugh and sing, and cast away care : sign, my boy, sign.

Eup. I can't, fir.

Fier. You can't ?

Ron. Ay, here's another now !

Fier. For what reason, pray ?

Ron.

Ron. What is all this madness? Are all the world turn'd fools? Every body says, no. Why how is this? what's the meaning of it?

Eup. To sign the contract at a time like this, wou'd be flying in the face of nature.

Ron. What! is my lady Croupillac at the bottom of all this?

Eup. No: she's a fool, and wants to break off the match for her own sake; 'tis not from her ridiculous noise that my uneasiness arises, I assure you.

Ron. Whence comes it then? Did that fellow out of the coach put it into your head? Are we indebted to him for all this?

Eup. What he told me must at least retard our happy marriage, which we were so eager upon.

Life. What did he tell you, fir,

Fier. Ay, fir, what news did he bring?

Eup. News that shock'd me: at Bourdeaux this man saw my son, naked, friendless, and in prison, dying with hunger; shame and sickness leading him to the grave: sickness and misfortunes had blasted the flower of his youth; and an obstinate fever, that had poisoned his blood, seemed to threaten that his last hour was not far off: when he saw him, he was then just expiring; alas! perhaps by this time he is no more.

Ron. Then his pension's paid.

Life. Dead!

Ron. Don't be frighten'd, child, what is it to you?

Fier. Ha! the blood hath forsaken her cheeks; she looks pale as death.

Ron. The jade has a little too much sensibility about her, that's the truth of it: but as he's dead, I forgive thee.

Fier. But after all, fir, do you mean——

Eup. Don't be afraid; you shall have her; it is my desire you shou'd: but to chuse a day of mourning for a wedding-day wou'd be highly unbecoming. How wou'd my grief interrupt your mirth! how wou'd your chaplets fade when wetted with a father's tears! No, my son, you must put off your happiness, and give me

one

one day to indulge my sorrow : joy so ill timed as this wou'd be an affront to decency.

Life. No doubt it wou'd : for my part, I had much rather share with you in your affliction, than think of marriage.

Fier. Nay, but, my dear father——

Ron. Why, you're an old fool : what ! put off a wedding, that has been the Lord knows how long upon the anvil, for an ungrateful young dog, who has been a hundred times disinherited : a p—x on you and your whole family !

Eup. At such a time a father must still be a father ; his errors, his vices, and his crimes always made me unhappy ; and it hurts me still more to think that he is dead without ever repenting of them.

Ron. Well, well, we'll make that matter easy : ha ! boy, let us give him some grand-sons to make him amends : come, come, sign, and let's have a dance : what nonsense this is !

Eup. But, fir——

Ron. But—Ouns ! this makes me mad ; to be sorry for the luckiest accident that cou'd happen, ridiculous ! Sorrow is good for nothing at the best ; but to whimper and whine, because you have got rid of a burthen, intolerable absurdity ! This eldest son, this scourge of your's, to my knowledge, two or three times had like to have broke your heart ; sooner or later he wou'd have brought you to the grave ; therefore pr'ythee, man, take my advice, and make yourself easy ; the loss of such a son is the greatest gain.

Eup. True, my friend ; but it is a gain that costs me more than you think : alas ! I lament that he died, and I lament that ever he was born.

Ron. Away, [*To Fierenfat,*] follow the old gentleman, and be as expeditious as you can ; the dead, you see, has got hold of the living ; so take the contract, I'll not be hagled with any longer ; take his hand, and make him sign. For you, madam, [*To Life*] we shall expect you to night ; every thing will go well, I warrant you.

Life. I'm in the utmost despair.

END of the SECOND ACT.

ACT



A C T III. S C E N E I.

EUPHEMON the Son, JASMIN.

Jas. I HAVE serv'd you, Sir, now two years, without knowing who or what you are: you were then my master; permit me now to call you my friend: you are now, like myself, thrown upon the wide world, and poverty has put us on a level: you are no longer a man of pleasure, the gallant and gay Euphemon, treated and caref'd by the men, surrounded and courted by the women. Every stiver you had is gone to the devil, and you have nothing now to do but to forget you was ever worth a shilling; for surely the most insupportable of all evils is the remembrance of happiness which we no longer enjoy: for my part, I was always plain Jasmin, and therefore the less to be pitied: born as I was to suffer, I suffer contentedly; to be in want of every thing is only natural to me; your old hat there, for instance, and coarse ragged waistcoat, was my usual garb; and you have great reason to be sorry that you had not always been as poor as myself.

Eup. How shame and ignominy attended upon misfortune! how melancholy a consideration is it to reflect that a servant shall have it in his power to humble me! and what's worse, I feel that he's in the right too; he endeavours to comfort me, after his manner; he keeps me company; and his heart, rough and unpolish'd as it is, is sensible, tender, and humane: born my equal, (for as a fellow creature so he was) he tries to support me under my affliction, and follows my unhappy fortune, whilst every friend I had, abandons me.

Jas. Friends, did you say, sir? Pray, my good master, who are they? How are those people made whom they call friends?

Exit.

Eup. You have seen them, Jasmin, coming into my house whenever they pleas'd, troubling me for ever with their importunate visits ; a crowd of parasites, who liv'd upon my bounty, complimented my fine taste, my elegance, my delicacy ; borrow'd my money, then prais'd me before my face, and stunn'd me with their ridiculous flattery.

Jas. Ay, poor devil ! you did not hear them laughing at you as they went away, and making a joke of your foolish generosity.

Eup. I believe it ; for in the beginning of my misfortunes, when I was arrested at Bourdeaux, not one of those, on whom I had lavished my all, ever came near me, or offer'd me his purse ; and when I got out sick and friendless, I apply'd to one of them in this poor ragged condition, and almost famish'd, for a little charitable assistance to lengthen out my wretched life, he turn'd away his unrelenting eye, pretended even to know nothing of me, and turn'd me out like a common beggar.

Jas. Not one to comfort or support you ?

Eup. Not one.

Jas. Such wretches ! friends indeed !

Eup. Men are made of iron.

Jas. And women too.

Eup. Alas ! from them I expected more tenderness ; but a thousand times met even with greater inhumanity : one of them in particular I well remember, who openly avowed her passion for me, and seemed to take a pride in obliging me ; and yet in the very lodgings which she had furnished at my expence, and with the money I had squandered upon her, did she procure every day new gallants, and treat them with my wine, whilst I was perishing with hunger in the street : in short, Jasmin, if it had not been for the old man who pick'd me up by chance at Bourdeaux, and who, he said, knew me when I was a child, death had by this time put an end to my misfortune : but know'st thou, Jasmin, whereabouts we are ?

Jas. Near Cognac, if I am not mistaken ; where, they tell me, my old master Rondon lives.

Eup.

Eup. Rondon ! the father of—who did you say ?

Jas. Rondon, a blunt odd fellow ; I had the honour of belonging to his kitchen once ; but, being always of a roving disposition, chose to travel ; and after that was an errand boy, a lacquey, a clerk, a foot-soldier, and a deserter, at length in Bourdeaux you took me into your service. Rondon perhaps may recollect me : who knows but in our adversity—

Eup. How long is it since you left him ?

Jas. About fifteen years. He was a character ; half pleasant, and half surly ; but at the bottom a good honest fellow : he had a child, I remember, an only daughter, a perfect jewel ; blue eyes, short nose, fresh complexion, vermilion lips ; and then for sense and understanding, quite a miracle. When I liv'd there, she was, let me see, about six or seven years old ; by my troth a sweet flower, and by this time fit to be gather'd.

Eup. O misery !

Jas. But why shou'd I talk to you about her ? it can be of no service to you ; I see you are concern'd, and the tears trickle down your cheeks : my poor master !

Eup. What unhappy fate cou'd guide me to this place ! O me !

Jas. You seem in deep contemplation, and as if the sight of this place made you unhappy : you weep too.

Eup. I have reason.

Jas. Do you know Rondon ? Are you any way related to the family ?

Eup. O ! let me alone, let me alone.

Jas. For pity's sake, my dear master, my friend, tell me who your are.

[*Embracing him.*]

Eup. I am—I am a poor unhappy wretch, a fool, a madman, a guilty abandon'd criminal, whom heaven shou'd punish, and earth detest : wou'd I were dead !

[*In tears.*]

Jas. No : we must live. What, die with famine whilst we can help ourselves ! we have our hands at least, let us make use of them, and leave off complaining : look on those fellows yonder, who have no fortune but their industry, with their spades in their hands, turning up the garden ; let us join them : come, work, man, and get your livelihood.

Eup.

Eup. Alas! those poor beings, mean as they are, and approaching nearer, to animal than human nature even they taste more pleasure and satisfaction in their labours, than my false delicacy and idle follies cou'd ever afford me; they live, at least, free from trouble, and remorse, and enjoy health of body, and peace of mind.

SCENE II.

M. de CROUPILLAC, Young EUPHEMON,
JASMIN.

M. de Croup. What do I see? or do my eyes deceive me? the more I look on him, the more I think it must be he. [*She looks stedfastly on him.*] And yet sure it cannot be the same; it can never be that gallant 'squire of Angoulême, that play'd so high, and seem'd to be lined with gold: It is he: [*She comes forward.*] but the other was rich and happy, handsome and well-made; this fellow looks poor and ugly. Sicknefs will spoil the finest face, and poverty makes a still more dreadful alteration.

Jas. What female apparition is this that haunts us with her malignant aspect?

Eup. If I am not mistaken, I know her well enough; she has seen me in all my pomp and splendor: how dreadful it is to appear mean and destitute in the eyes of those who have seen us in affluence and prosperity! let us be gone.

M. de Croup. What strange accident, my dear child, hath reduced thee to this pitiful plight?

[*Coming up to Euphemon.*]

Eup. My own folly.

M. de Croup. Why, what a figure dost thou make!

Eup. Ay, Madam, the consequence of having good friends; of being robb'd, and plunder'd.

M. de Croup. Plunder'd! by whom? how? when? where?

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K

Jas.

Jas. O, from mere goodness of heart : our thieves were mighty honest creatures, persons that figur'd in the beau monde, amiable triflers, gamblers, bottle companions, agreeable story-tellers, men of wit, and women of beauty.

M. de Croup. I understand you : you have squander'd away all you had in eating and drinking : but you will think this nothing, when you come to know the distresses I have undergone, and the losses I have suffer'd with regard to——matrimony.

Eup. Your humble servant, Madam.

M. de Croup. Your servant, indeed ! no, no, positively you shall stay, and hear my misfortunes ; you shall be sorry for me.

[*Stopping him.*]

Eup. Well, well, I am sorry for you ; good by to you.

M. de Croup. Nay, now I vow and swear you shall hear the whole story. One *Monf. Fierenfat*, a lawyer by profession, got acquainted with me at Angoulême, about [*She runs after him*] the time when you beat the four bailiffs, and run away : this *Monf. Fierenfat*, you must know, lives not far from hence, with his father *Euphemon*.

Eup. *Euphemon* !

[*Coming back.*]

M. de Croup. Yes.

Eup. For heaven's sake, Madam, that *Euphemon*, mean you, so celebrated for his virtues, the honour of his race, cou'd he——

M. de Croup. Yes, Sir.

Eup. And does he live here ?

M. de Croup. He does.

Eup. And may I ask you, Madam, how he is ? how does he ?

M. de Croup. Very well, I believe, Sir : what the duce ails him ?

Eup. And pray, Madam, what do they say——

M. de Croup. Of whom, Sir ?

Eup. Of an eldest son he had formerly.

M. de Croup. O, an ill-begotten rogue, a rake, a rattle-pate, an arrant sot, a madman, a fellow given up to every vice ; hang'd, I suppose, by this time.

Eup.

Eup. Indeed, Madam—but I am ashamed of interrupting you in this manner.

M. de Croup. To proceed then; this Mons. Fierenfat, as I was telling you, his younger brother, made strong love to me, and was to have been marry'd to me.

Eup. And is he so happy? have you got him?

M. de Croup. No: wou'd you think it, Sir? this fool, puff'd up with the thoughts of stepping into all his mad brother's fortune, growing rich, and wanting to be more so, breaks off this match, which would have been so honourable to him, and now wants to lay hold of the daughter of one Rondon, a vulgar cit, the cock of the village here.

Eup. Going to marry her, say you?

M. de Croup. And here am I most dreadfully jealous of her.

Eup. That beautiful creature.—Jasmin here was just now giving me a picture of her: wou'd she throw herself away—

Jas. What are you about, Sir? [*Aside to Euphemon.* This husband is as good as another for her, I think: but my master's a strange man, every thing afflicts him.

Eup. This is beyond all bearing. [*Aside.* My heart, Madam, is deeply sensible of the injury you have receiv'd; this Life should never be his, if I could prevent it. [*Aloud to M. de Croupillac.*

M. de Croup. You take it rightly, Sir; you lament my unhappy fate; the poor are always compassionate; you had not half the good-nature, when you roll'd in money; but mind what I have to say, in this life we may always help one another.

Jas. Help us then, dear Madam, I beseech you.

M. de Croup. You must act for me in this affair.

Eup. I, madam! how is it possible for me to serve you?

M. de Croup. O, a thousand ways! you shall take my cause in hand: another dress, and a little finery, will make you still look tolerably handsome: you have a polite insinuating address, and know how to wheedle a young girl: introduce yourself into the family, play the

flatterer with Fierenfat, compliment him on his riches, his wit, his dress, every thing about him, get into his good graces, and, whilst I enter my protest against the unlawful procedure, you will do all the rest; by this means I shall at least gain time.

Eup. [Seeing his father at a distance.] What do I see? O heaven!

M. de Croup. Hai! hai! the fellow's mad sure.

[He runs off.]

Jas. He's afraid of you, Ma'am, that's all.

M. de Croup. A blockhead! here, you, stop, hark ye. hark ye. I must follow him.

SCENE III.

Old EUPHEMON, JASMIN.

Eup. Even the imperfect glance I had of that poor wretch, whoever he is, has, I know not why, fill'd my heart with anguish and disquietude: he had a noble air, and a turn of features, that some how or other affected me: alas! I never see a poor creature of that age, but the sad image of my unhappy son recurs to me; I have still a father's tenderness for him: but he is dead, or only lives with infamy to disgrace me. Both my children make me miserable: one by his vice and debauchery is my eternal punishment, whilst the other abuses my indulgence, and knows but too well, that he is the only support of my old age: life is a burthen to me, and I must soon sink beneath it. Who art thou, friend?

[Perceiving Jasmin, who bows to him.]

Jas. Honour'd Sir, noble and generous Euphemon, don't you remember poor Jasmin, Sir, who liv'd with Rondon?

Eup. Ah, Jasmin, is it you? time alters our faces, as you see by mine: when you liv'd here I had a good fresh complexion, was hearty and well; but age comes on, my time is almost over: and so, Jasmin, you are come back to your own country at last?

Jas.

Jas. Yes, Sir : I grew weary of such a fatiguing life, of rambling about like a wand'ring Jew, so I e'en came home. Happiness is a fugitive being, I am sure it has been so to me. The devil took me out, I believe, led me a long walk, and now has brought me back again.

Eup. Well, I may assist you perhaps if you behave yourself well : but who was that other poor wretch you were talking with, he that ran off just now ?

Jas. A comrade of mine ; a poor wretch, half starv'd like myself, without a farthing ; he's in search of employment as well as I.

Eup. Perhaps I may find some for you both : is he sober and sensible ?

Jas. He ought to be so : he has very good parts, I know ; can write, and read, understands arithmetic, draws a little, knows music ; he was very well brought up.

Eup. If so, I have a place ready for him : as for you, Jasmin, my son shall hire you ; he is going to be marry'd, to-night perhaps : as his fortune is increas'd, he'll want more servants ; and one of his is going away too, and you may step into his place : to-night I'll present you both ; you shall see him at my neighbour Rondon's ; I'll talk to him there about it ; so fare thee well, Jasmin ; in the mean time, here's something for you to drink.

SCENE IV.

JASMIN alone.

The good man ! Blessings on him ! Cou'd I ever have thought, in this vile age, to have met with so good a heart ? His air, his demeanor, his benevolent soul, form together a speaking picture of the integrity of former ages.

SCENE V.

Young EUPHEMON, JASMIN.

Jas. Well, I have got a place for you ; we are both to serve Euphemon. *[Embracing him.]*

Eup. Ay ! Euphemon !

Jas. Yes, if you like it : you seem surpris'd : why are your eyes turn'd up in this manner, as if you were going to be exorcis'd ? What is the meaning of those deep sighs, that will not let you speak ?

Eup. O, Jasmin, I can no longer contain myself ; tenderness, pain, remorse, all press upon me.

Jas. What ! has my lady there said any thing to you ? What has she told you ?

Eup. She told me nothing.

Jas. What's the matter then ?

Eup. My heart will no longer suffer me to conceal it from you : in short, that Euphemon——

Jas. Well, what of him ?

Eup. O, he is——my father.

Jas. Your father, sir ?

Eup. Yes, Jasmin : I am that eldest son, that criminal, that unfortunate, who has ruin'd his unhappy family. O, how my heart flutter'd at the sight of him, and offer'd up its humble prayers ! O, with what joy cou'd I have fall'n down at his feet !

Jas. Thou, Euphemon's son ! forgive me, sir, forgive my rude familiarity.

Eup. O, Jasmin, think'st thou a heart, oppress'd as mine is, can be offended ?

Jas. You are the son of a man whom all the world admires ; a man of a million : to say the truth, the reputation of his son shews to no great advantage when placed near his father's ?

Eup. 'Tis that which gives me most uneasiness. But tell me, what did my father say ?

Jas. I told him, sir, we were two unfortunate youths, very poor, but well educated, and wou'd be glad to serve him :

him: he lamented our fate, and consented to take us. This evening he will introduce you to his son, the President, who, it seems, is to marry Life; that fortunate brother, to whom my old master Rondon is to be father-in-law.

Eup. And now, Jasmin, I will unfold my heart to you: hear the history of my misfortunes, and think how wretched I must be, to draw upon myself, by a variety of follies, the just indignation of a beloved parent; to be hated, despis'd, disinherited; to feel all the horrors of beggary and want; to see my fortune given to my younger brother, and forc'd after all, in my state of ignominy, to serve the very man who has robb'd me of every thing: this is my fate, a fate I have but too well deserved. But wou'd you believe it, Jasmin, in the midst of all my calamities, dead as I am to pleasures, and dead to every hope, hated by the world, despis'd by all, and expecting nothing, I yet dare to be——jealous.

Jas. Jealous! of whom?

Eup. Of my brother; of Life.

Jas. So, you are in love with your sister! well, that's a stroke worthy of you; the only sin you had never yet committed.

Eup. You are to know, Jasmin, (for I believe you had then left Rondon) that we were no sooner out of our infancy, than our parents promis'd us to each other: our hearts readily obey'd, and were united: the conformity of our ages, our taste, our manners, our situation, every thing conspir'd to strengthen the tie; like two young trees, we grew up together, and were to have join'd our branches: time, that heighten'd her charms, improv'd her tenderness, and love made her every day more lovely: the world at that blest time might have envied me; but I was young, foolish, and blind; link'd in with a set of wretches, who seduc'd my innocence, intoxicated with folly and extravagance, I made a merit of despising her passion for me, nay even affronted her: O, I reflect on it with horror. The croud of vices, that rush'd in upon me, carry'd me away from my father and my friends: what was my fate after this I need not inform you. Every thing is gone; and hea-

ven, which tore me from her, has left me nothing but a heart to punish me.

Jas. If so it be, and you really love her still, notwithstanding all your distress, M. de Croupillac's advice was good, to insinuate yourself, if possible, into Rondon's family. Your purse is empty, and love perhaps may find means to fill it again.

Eup. Cou'd I ever dare to look upon her, to come in her sight, after what I have done, and in this miserable condition? No, I must avoid a father and a mistress; I have abused the goodness of them both, and know not (but it is too late to repent) which shou'd hate the most.

SCENE VI.

Young EUPHEMON, FIERENFAT, JASMIN.

Jas. O here comes our wise president.

Eup. Is it he? I never saw his face before; my brother and my rival!

Fier. Come, come, this does not go amiss. I have press'd, and rated the old gentleman in such a manner, that, I believe, we shall be able to finish the affair in spite of him. But where are these fellows who are to serve me?

Jas. We are come, please your honour, to offer ourselves——

Fier. Which of you two can read?

Jas. He, sir.

Fier. And write too, I suppose?

Jas. O yes, sir, and cypher, and cast accounts.

Fier. Ay, but he must know how to talk too.

Jas. He's a little modest, sir, and but just recover'd from a fit of sickness.

Fier. He looks bold enough, I think, and as if he knew his own merit. Well, sir, what wages do you expect?

Eup. None, sir.

Jas.

Jas. O, sir, we have a most heroic soul.

Fier. Well, upon those conditions I take you into my service: come, I'll present you to my wife.

Eup. Your wife, sir?

Fier. Yes, I'm going to be marry'd.

Eup. When, pray?

Fier. To night.

Eup. O, heav'n! pray, sir, forgive me, but are you deeply in love with her, sir?

Fier. Certainly.

Eup. Indeed?

Fier. Yes.

Eup. And are you belov'd?

Fier. I hope so. A droll fellow, this! You seem extremely curious, Sir.

Eup. How I wish to contradict him, and punish him for his excess of happiness. [*Aside.*

Fier. What does he say?

[*To Jasmin.*

Jas. He says, he wishes with all his heart he was, like you, form'd to please.

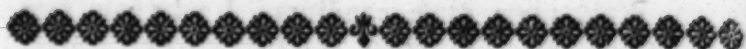
Fier. The ambition of the coxcomb! but come, follow me: be diligent, sober, prudent, careful, clever, and respectful. What, ho! la Fleur, la Brie, you rascals, where are you all? follow me.

[*He goes out.*

Eup. Now cou'd I like to salute him with two good boxes on the ear, to make that lawyer's face of his twinge again.

Jas. I find, my friend, you are not mended much.

Eup. I'm sure it is time to be so; and I assure you, I intend to be wiser for the future; from all my errors I shall at least reap this advantage, To know how to suffer.



ACT IV. SCENE I.

M. de CROUPILLAC, Young EUPHEMON,
JASMIN.

M. de Croup. I HAVE taken care, my friend, by way of precaution, to bring two serjeants from Angoulême; have you perform'd your part as well, and done as I desir'd you? Shall you be able, think you, to put on an air of consequence, and sow a little dissension in the family? Have you flatter'd the old gentleman? Have you look'd forward a little?

Eup. No.

M. de Croup. How?

Eup. Believe me, madam, I long to throw myself at her feet.

M. de Croup. Pray then make haste and do it; begin your attack as soon as possible, and restore my ungrateful seducer. I'll go to law for you, and you shall make love for me: chear up, man, put on your best looks; assume that air of importance and self-sufficiency, which is sure to conquer every heart, which baffles wit, and triumphs over wisdom: to be happy in love, you must be bold; resume your wonted courage.

Eup. O, I have lost it all.

M. de Croup. How so, man? what's the matter?

Eup. I had courage enough when I was not in love; but at present——

Jas. There may be other reasons why he shou'd be rather bashful; this Fierenfat, you must know, is our lord and master, and has taken us both into his service.

M. de Croup. So much the better; a lucky circumstance: to be a domestic in your mistress's family, let me tell you, is a singular happiness: make your advantage of it.

Jas.

Jas. Yonder's something pretty, and coming this way too, to take the air, I suppose: she seems to come out of Rondon's house.

M. de Croup. 'Tis she: come, my dear lover, make haste, now's your time: pluck up your courage, and speak to her; what! sighing and trembling, and pretend to love her too? O, fy, fy!

Eup. O, if you knew the situation of my heart, you wou'd not wonder at my trembling and confusion!

Jas. Sweet creature! how beautiful she looks!

[*Seeing Life at a distance.*]

Eup. 'Tis she: O, heav'n! I die with love, with remorse, with jealousy, and despair.

M. de Croup. Adieu: I will endeavour to return the obligation.

Eup. All I ask of you is, if possible, to put off this cruel marriage.

M. de Croup. That's what I shall immediately set about.

Eup. Alas! I tremble.

Jas. We must try to get her by herself; let us retire a little.

Eup. I'll follow you: I scarce know what I have done, or what I am going to do. I shall never be able to face her.

SCENE II.

LISE, MARTHA, JASMIN at the farther end of the stage, and EUPHEMON behind him.

Life. In vain do I go in and out, backwards, and forwards, endeavouring, if possible, to hide myself from myself; in vain do I seek for solitude, and examine my own heart: alas! the more I look into it, the more am I convinc'd, that happiness was never made for me: If I do at any time enjoy a momentary comfort, it is from that old ridiculous creature Croupillac, and the thought of her preventing this detested match; but then all my apprehensions return, when Fierenfat and my father

urge

urge it upon me with repeated importunities: they have gain'd over the good Euphemon.

Mar. In troth, the old man is too good natur'd, and Fierenfat governs him most tyrannically.

Life. I pardon him, he's fond of an only child; his eldest, poor man, gave him a great deal of uneasiness, and now he relies intirely upon the other.

Mar. But, after all, madam, notwithstanding every thing that has been reported, it is not clear that the other is yet dead.

Life. Alas! if dead, I must lament; if living, I must hate him: cruel alternatives!

Mar. The news of his danger, however, seem'd to have a powerful effect upon you.

Life. One might be sorry for his misfortunes without loving him, you know.

Mar. But one may as well be dead as not be lov'd: and so you are really to be marry'd to his brother?

Life. My dear child, I am distracted at the thought of it: you have long known my indifference for Fierenfat; it is now chang'd to horror and detestation: marriage with him is a potion most dreadfully bitter, which, in my present desperate case, I must swallow much against my will, I assure you; tho' my hand, at the same time, rejects it with horror and indignation.

Jas. Hark'ee, fair lady, will you give me leave to whisper a word or two in your ear?

[*Pulling Martha by the Sleeve.*

Mar. Most willingly, Sir.

[*To Jasmin.*

Life. O cruel fate! why did'st thou prolong a life, which an ungrateful guilty lover has made so truly miserable?

[*Aside.*

Mar. One of the President's servants, madam, but just now hir'd to him; he says, he shou'd be glad to speak to you.

[*To Life.*

Life. Let him wait.

Mar. Friend, my lady desires you wou'd wait a little.

[*To Jasmin.*

Life.

Life. Always teasing me thus! even when he is absent I can have no peace for him. O dear! how weary am I of this marriage already!

Jas. My dear girl, procure us this favour, if you can.

[*To Martha.*]

Mar. Madam, he says he must speak with you.

[*Coming back.*]

Life. So! I see I must go.

Mar. There is a person, it seems, who is very desirous of seeing you; he must speak to you, he says, or die.

Life. I find I must go in and hide myself.

SCENE III.

LISE, MARTHA, Young EUPHEMON, leaning on JASMIN.

Eup. I can neither walk nor speak; my sight too fails me.

Jas. Give me your hand; we'll cross her as she comes.

Eup. O! I feel a deadly coldness at my heart [*to Life*] will you permit.—

Life. What wou'd you, sir? [*Without looking at him.*]

Eup. What wou'd I? that death which I deserve.

[*Throwing himself on his knees.*]

Life. What do I see? O heav'n!

Mar. Amazing! Euphemon! good God, how chang'd!

Eup. Chang'd indeed: yes, Life, you are reveng'd of me. Well may you wonder; for I am chang'd in every thing: no longer do you behold in me that madman, that false wretch, so fear'd and detested here; he who betray'd the cause of nature and of love: young and thoughtless as I was, I fell a prey to every passion, and adopted every vice from my loose companions: but O! the worst of all my crimes, which never can be blotted out, never atoned for, was my offending you: but here I swear,

I swear, by thee, and by that virtue, which, tho' I have forsaken, I yet adore, I have found my error. Vice, tho' I admitted it, was a stranger to this heart, which is now no longer stain'd with those guilty blemishes, that obscur'd its native lustre; that pure, that sacred passion, which is still reserv'd for you, hath refin'd it; that tender passion, and that alone, brought me hither, not to break off your new engagements, or oppose your happiness, that wou'd ill become a poor abandon'd wretch like me: but, since the misfortunes which I so well deserv'd have brought me, even in the prime of life, to the brink of the grave, I cou'd not help seeking you, to be a witness of my last moments; and happy, thrice happy shall I be, if he, who was once destin'd to be your husband, at length shall die, and not be hated by you.

Life. I am scarce myself: can it be Euphemon? can it be you? O heav'n! in what a condition too, and what a time is this: wretch as thou art, what cruel injuries hast thou done to both of us!

Eup. I know it: at sight of thee, every folly I have been guilty of appears doubly inexcusable: they were dreadful, and you know they were; that is some punishment, but not so much as I deserve.

Life. And is it true, unhappy man, that thou hast at last repented of thy follies; that your rebellious heart is at length subdued, and misfortune hath pointed out to you the road of virtue?

Eup. Alas! what will it avail, that my eyes are open'd, when it is too late! In vain is that heart subdued, in vain is my return to virtue, since I have lost in you its best, its only valuable reward.

Life. Yet, answer me, Euphemon; may I believe you have indeed gain'd this glorious victory? consult your own breast, and do not again deceive me: can you yet be prudent and virtuous?

Eup. I am so; for still my heart adores you.

Life. And dost thou still love, Euphemon?

Eup. Do I love? by that I live, that alone has supported me. I have borne every thing, even infamy itself; and a thousand times I wou'd have put an end to my

my wretched life, but that still I lov'd it; because it belong'd to you: yes, to you I owe my present sentiments, my being, and that new life, which now dawns upon me: to you I owe the return of my reason: with love like mine, wou'd to heav'n I may be able to preserve it! O, do not hide from me that charming face: look at me: see how chang'd I am: see the cruel effect of care and sorrow: the roses of youth are wither'd by remorse and misery: there was a time when Euphemon wou'd not thus have affrighted you: do but look on me, 'tis all I ask.

Life. If I see the thinking, the reform'd, the constant Euphemon, it is enough: in my eyes he is but too amiable.

Eup. What says my Life? gracious heav'n! she weeps.

Life. O support me, my senses fail. Can I ever be the wife of Euphemon's brother? [*To Martha.*
But tell me, Have you yet seen your fahter?

[*Turning to Euphemon.*

Eup. O! I blush to appear before that good old man, whom I have so dishonour'd: hated as I am, and banish'd from his presence, I love and reverence, but dare not look upon him.

Life. What then is your design?

Eup. If heav'n shou'd graciously prolong my days, if you must be my brother's happy lot, I propose to change my name and profession, serve as a soldier, and seek for death in the field of honour; perhaps success in arms may acquire me some glory, and even you may hereafter shed a tear over the unhappy Euphemon. My honour at least will never suffer by the employment; Rose and Fabert set out as I shall do.

Life. 'Tis a noble resolution; and the heart that was capable of making it must be above guilt and meanness: sentiments like these affect me much more even than the tears you shed at my feet. No, Euphemon, if I am left at liberty to dispose of myself, and can possibly avoid the hateful match propos'd for me, if it is in my power to determine your fate, you shall not go so far to change your condition.

Eup.

Eup. O heav'n! and does thy gracious heart melt at my misfortunes?

Life. They affected me most deeply; but your repentance hath secured me.

Eup. And will those dear eyes, that look'd on me so long with indignation, will they soften into love and tenderness? O, thou hast reviv'd a flame in the breast of Euphemon, which his follies had almost extinguish'd. Fond as my brother is of riches, tho' my father has giv'n him all that inheritance, which nature had design'd for me, he still must envy my happiness. I am dear to you; he alone, and not Euphemon, is disinherited. O, I shall die with joy.

Mar. Deuce on him, here he comes.

Life. Be upon your guard, Euphemon; keep in those struggling sighs, and dissemble,

Eup. Why shou'd I, if you love me?

Life. Consider my relations, consider your own father. Your brother saw us together, saw you at my feet; and all that we can now do is, not to let him know who you are.

Mar. I can't help laughing, to think what a passion his gravity will be in.

SCENE IV.

LISE, YOUNG EUPHEMON, MARTHA, JASMIN, FIERENFAT at the farther end of the stage, Euphemon turning his back to him.

Fier. Either some devil has impair'd these eyes of mine; or, i I see clear, I most certainly beheld—O yes—it is so—it's all over with me.

O it is you, sir, is it? traitor, rascal, forger!

[*Coming forwards towards Euphemon.*

Eup. I, I cou'd—

[*Enrag'd.*

Jas. Sir, sir, [*Placing himself before them.*] this—this is an affair of importance that was going forward, and you interrupt it, sir; an affair of love, sir, tenderness, respect,

respect, gratitude, and virtue—for my part I'm distracted when I think of it.

Fier. An affair of virtue ! O yes, and kissing her hand too ! call you that virtue ! rascal, slave !

Eup. O Jasmin, if I dar'd—

Fier. No : this is a gallant indeed with a witness : had he been a gentleman ; but a servant, a beggar—If I was to sue him in a court of justice, 'twou'd be only so much money flung away.

Life. Be calm ; if you have any regard for me, I beg you will. [*To Euphemon.*]

Fier. The traitor ! I'll have you hang'd, you dog. [*To Martha.*]
You laugh, mistress.

Mar. I do, to be sure, sir.

Fier. And why do you ? What do you laugh at ?

Mar. Lord, sir, 'tis such a comical affair—

Fier. You don't know, madam, the dangeryou are in : you little think, my good friend, what the law inflicts on such delinquents as you, and how often you may be—

Mar. Pardon me, sir, I know it mighty well.

Fier. You, madam, [*To Life,*] seem to be deaf to all this ; faithless woman ! with that air of innocence too ! to play me such a trick : your inconstancy is a little premature on our wedding-day, and just before we are marry'd : 'tis a wonderful mark of your chastity.

Life. Don't be in a passion, sir, nor lightly condemn innocence on bare appearances only.

Fier. Innocence, indeed !

Life. Yes, sir, when you know my sentiments, you will esteem me for them.

Fier. You go an excellent way to gain esteem.

Eup. This is too much.

Life. What madness ! for heaven's sake be calm, restrain— [*To Euphemon.*]

Eup. No : I will never suffer him to cast reproach on you.

Fier. Do you know, madam, that you lose your jointure, your estate, your portion, every thing, as soon as—

Eup. [*In a passion, putting his hand on his sword.*] Do you know, sir, how to hold your tongue ?

Life.

Life. O, forbear.

Eup. Come, come, Mr President, lay aside your assuming airs, be a little less fierce and haughty; a little less of the judge, if you please: this lady has not yet the honour to be your wife, nor is she even your mistress, sir: what right have you to complain? your claim is void: you shou'd have known how to please, before you had a right to be angry: such charms were never made for you, and therefore jealousy sits but ill upon you. You see she's kind, and forgives my warmth; it will become you, Sir, to follow her example.

Fier. [*Int. a posture of defence*] I'll bear no more: where are my servants? help here!

Eup. How's this!

Fier. Fetch me a constable here!

Life. Retire, I beseech you. [*To Euphemon.*]

Fier. I'll make you know, Sir, the respect that's due to my rank and profession.

Eup. Observe, Sir, what you owe to this lady: as to myself, however things may now appear, the respect perhaps is due to me.

Fier. You, Sir, you?

Eup. Yes, Sir, me, me.

Fier. This is a pure impudent fellow: some lover, I suppose, in the disguise of a servant. Who are you, Sir? answer me.

Eup. I know not who I am, nor what will be my fate: my rank, condition, fortune, happiness, my very being, all depends on her heart, her kind-looks, and her propitious bounty.

Fier. They may soon depend upon a court of justice, that I assure you. I'll go this instant, prepare my records, and hasten to sign the instrument. Begone, ungrateful woman, and dread my resentment; I'll bring your relations, and your father; then your innocence will appear in its proper light, and they will esteem you accordingly.

SCENE

SCENE V.

LISE, YOUNG EUPHEMON, MARTHA.

Lise. For heav'n's sake, conceal yourself; let us go in immediately; I tremble at the consequence of this. If your father should find out it was you, nothing will appease him: he will conclude, that some new extravagance brought you back here on purpose to insult him, and to sow division between our families; and then you will be confin'd, perhaps, even without being so much as heard in your own defence.

Mar. Let me conceal him, and I'll warrant they shan't easily find him out.

Lise. Come, come, you must away; I must endeavour to reconcile your father: the return of nature shall, if possible, be the work of love: you must be conceal'd a while—take you care [*To Martha*] he does not appear: begone immediately.

SCENE VI.

RONDON, LISE.

Ron. Well, my *Lise*, how is it; I was in search of you and your husband.

Lise. Thank God! he is not so yet.

[*Aside.*

Ron. Where are you going?

Lise. Decency, Sir, at present obliges me to avoid him.

[*She goes out.*

Ron. This President is a dangerous man, I find: now should I like to be incog. in some place close to 'em, only to see how two lovers look when they are just going to be marry'd.

SCENE

SCENE VII.

FIERENFAT, RONDON, Constables, &c.

Fier. Where are they, where are they? ha! gone; the subtle villains have escap'd me: where have the rascals hid themselves?

Ron. Your reverence seems out of breath? what are you in such a hurry about? who are you hunting after? what have they done to you?

Fier. Made a cuckold of me, that's all.

Ron. Ha! ha! a cuckold! ha! how! what is all this?

Fier. Yes, yes, my wife: heav'n preserve me from ever giving her that name! Yes, Sir, a cuckold I am, in spite of all the laws in the kingdom.

Ron. My son-in-law!

Fier. Yes, my father-in-law, 'tis but too true.

Ron. Well, but the affair—

Fier. Is clear as possible.

Ron. You try my patience too far.

Fier. I am sure they have mine.

Ron. If I could believe—

Fier. You may believe it all, Sir, I assure you.

Ron. But the more I hear, the less I understand.

Fier. And yet it's very easy to comprehend.

Ron. If I were once convinc'd of it, the world should be a witness of my resentment, I wou'd strangle her with my own hands.

Fier. Strangle her then by all means; for the thing is fairly prov'd

Ron. Something, no doubt, is wrong, by my finding her here in that condition; she hung down her head, and cou'd scarce speak to me; seem'd frighten'd, and embarrass'd too. Come, my son, let us in, and surprize her. This is a case of honour, and where that is concern'd, Rondon listens no longer to reason. Away.

END of the FOURTH ACT.



ACT V. SCENE I.

LISE, MARTHA.

Life. **W**HAT a desperate situation is mine ! scarce can I believe myself safe, even with you. Think what it must be for a soul, so pure, so delicate, as mine, to suffer even for a moment such injurious suspicions : Euphemon, thou dear but fatal lover, thou wert born but to afflict me ; thy absence was worse than death to me, and now thy return exposes me to infamy : [*Turning to Martha*] for heav'n's sake, take care of him, for they are making the strictest enquiry.

Mar. O never fear ; I shall put 'em to their trumps, I warrant you ; I defy all their search-warrants : I have some certain little cunning holes in my cabinet which these ferrets can never get at ; there, madam, your lover lies snug, safely conceal'd from the inquisitive eyes of long-rob'd pedants. I have led the hounds a pretty good chace, and now the whole pack is at fault.

SCENE II.

LISE, MARTHA, JASMIN.

Life. Well, Jasmin, how stand our affairs ?

Jas. O, I have pass'd my examination most gloriously, gone through it like an old offender, grown grey in the profession, and answer'd every question without fear or trembling. One of them drawl'd out his words with all the solemnity of a pedagogue ; another put on a haughty air, and wou'd have brow-beated me ; a third, in a pretty silver tone, cry'd out, Child, tell us the truth : whilst I, with

I, with most laconic brevity, and unalterable firmness, fairly routed the whole group of pedants.

Life. They know nothing then.

Jas. Nothing: to-morrow perhaps they may know all: time, you know, brings every thing to light.

Life. I hope at least Fierenfat will not have time to prejudice his father against me: I have a thousand fears about it: I tremble for him, and for my own honour: in love alone I have plac'd my hopes, that will assist me—

Mar. For my part, I'm in a sad quandary about it, and wish ev'ry thing mayn't go wrong: consider, madam, we have against us two old fathers, and a president, besides scolds and prudes innumerable: if you knew what haughty airs they give themselves, what a supercilious sneer, and severe tone, their proud virtue puts on upon this occasion, with what insolent acrimony they have persecuted your innocence, believe me, madam, their clamours, with their affected zeal, and most religious fury, wou'd raise your laughter, perhaps even make you tremble.

Jas. I have travell'd, madam, and seen noise, and bustle enough, but never before was I witness to such a hubbub: the whole house is turn'd topsy-turvy: they are all knaves, fools, or madmen; whispering lies against you, and adding one untruth to another; telling the story a hundred different ways: the poor fiddlers are sent back without receiving a farthing, or a drop of drink: six tables prepar'd for the wedding feast, full of the finest delicacies, overset in the confusion: the people run backwards and forwards; the footmen drink and laugh; Rondon swears, and Fierenfat is employ'd in-writing the case out.

Life. And what does the worthy father of Euphemon do amid'st all this bustle?

Mar. O, madam, in his dejected aspect we may read the sorrows of afflicted virtue: he lifts up his eyes to heaven, and cannot bring himself to believe, that you have stain'd the honour of your spotless youth with so black a crime: he defends you to your friends by the strongest arguments: and when at length he is stagger'd
by

by the proofs they bring against you, he sighs, and says, if you are guilty, he will never again depend on any mortal breathing.

Life. The good old man, how his tenderness affects me!

Mar. Here comes another, of a different kind, master Rondon; let us avoid him, madam.

Life. By no means: my heart is innocent, and shou'd be afraid of nothing.

Jas. But I am, I assure you.

SCENE III.

LISE, MARTHA, RONDON.

Ron. O thou subtle gipsy, thou forward, thou unnatural girl! O Life, Life! But come, madam, I must know the bottom of this vile proceeding: how long have you been acquainted with this robber, this pirate? Tell me his name, his rank, his profession; how got he into your heart? Whence comes he, and where is he? Answer me, madam, answer me. You condemn me, madam, and laugh at my resentment: are not you ashamed?

Life. No, sir.

Ron. Always no, no, to me: am I never to hear any thing but no? It increases my suspicion: when I am injur'd, I expect at least to be treated with respect. I will be fear'd, madam, and obey'd too.

Life. And so you shall, sir, I will discover every thing to you.

Ron. Well, that's saying something however: when I begin to threaten, people will mind me a little, and——

Life. I have only one favour to beg of you—that, before I say any thing to you, Euphemon will be so obliging as to let me speak a few words to him.

Ron. Euphemon! why, what has he to do with it? I think I am the properest person to be spoke to.

Life. My dear father, I have a secret to entrust to him:

him : let me beg you, for the sake of your own honour, to send him to me : permit me—but I can tell you no more.

Ron. I must e'en yield to her request ; she wants to explain herself to my good old friend, and I think I may safely trust her alone with him ; and then to nunnery with the little huffey immediately.

SCENE IV.

LISE, MARTHA.

Lise. O that I may be able to melt the good Euphemon ! How my heart flutters and leaps within me ! my life or death depends on this important moment. He comes. Hark'ee, Martha. *[Whispers her.]*

Mar. I'll take care, madam.

SCENE V.

Old EUPHEMON.

Lise. A chair here—pray, sir, be seated. Oh ! *[sighs.]* permit me, sir, on my knees——

Eup. You mean to affront me, madam.

[Raising her up.]

Lise. Far from it, sir ; my heart esteems and reveres you ; I have ever look'd on you as a father.

Eup. Are you my daughter ?

Lise. Yes, sir, I flatter myself I have not been unworthy of that name.

Eup. After the unhappy affair, madam, that has broke off our connection, I must own——

Lise. Be you my judge, sir, and look into my heart ; that judge, I doubt not, will one day be my protector : but hear me, sir, I will speak my own sentiments, perhaps they may be yours also.

[She takes a chair and sits by him.]
And

And now, fir, tell me ; if your heart had for a long time been bound by the purest and most tender regard to an object, whose early years gave the fairest promise of all that is amiable, who every day advanc'd in beauty, merit, and accomplishments ; if, after all, his easy and deluded youth gave way to inclination, and sacrificed duty, friendship, every thing, to unbridled licentiousness—

Eup. Well, madam.

Life. If fatal experience shou'd teach him what false happiness he had so long pursued ; shou'd teach him that the vain objects of his search sprang but from error, and were follow'd by remorse ! if at length, ashamed of his follies, his reason, instructed by misfortune, shou'd again light up his virtues, and give him a new heart ; if, restor'd to his natural form, he shou'd become faithful, just, and honest, wou'd you, fir, cou'd you, then shut up that heart which once was open to receive him ?

Eup. What am I to conclude from this picture, or what has it to do with our affair, and the injury I have receiv'd from your conduct ? The wretch who was seen at your feet is a young man, utterly unknown to every body here : the widow says indeed she remembers him six months at Angoulême : another tells me he is a hardy profligate, with a head full of dark intrigues, and every kind of debauchery ; a character which doubles my astonishment : I shudder with horror at it.

Life. O, fir, when I have told you all, you will be much more astonished ; for heaven's sake, hear me then : I know you have a noble and a generous heart, that never was form'd for cruelty ; let me then ask you, was not your son Euphemon once most dear to you ?

Eup. He was, I own to you, he was ; and therefore it is that his ingratitude calls for a severer vengeance : I have wept his misfortunes, and his death ; but nature, in the midst of all my anguish, left my reason but the more sensible of my injuries, and more resolv'd to punish them.

Life. And cou'd you punish him for ever ? cou'd you still be so unhappy, so miserable, as to hate him ? cou'd you throw from you a repenting child, an alter'd son,

whose change wou'd bring back to you the image of yourself? cou'd you repulse this son were he now in tears at your feet?

Eup. Alas! you have forgot, you shou'd not thus open a wound that bleeds too fresh, and inflict new torments on me: my son is dead, or far from hence remains still harden'd in his follies. O if he had return'd to virtue, wou'd he not come, and ask forgiveness of me?

Lise. Yes, and he will come to ask it; you shall hear him, and hear him with compassion too; indeed you shall.

Eup. What say you?

Lise. Yes, sir: if death has not already put an end to his shame and grief, you may perhaps see him dying at your feet with excess of sorrow and repentance.

Eup. You see too well how deeply I am affected: my son alive!

Lise. If he yet lives, he lives to love and honour you.

Eup. To love and honour me! impossible! how can I ever know it? from whom must I learn that?

Lise. From his own heart.

Eup. But do you think——

Lise. With regard to every thing I have said concerning him, you may depend on my veracity.

Eup. Come, you have kept me in suspense too long; have pity on my declining years. Alas! I am full of hopes, and fears: I did indeed love my son, these tears speak for me: I lov'd him tenderly. O if he yet lives! if he is return'd to virtue! explain, I beseech you, speak to me, tell me all.

Lise. I will: it is time now, and you shall be satisfy'd. [*She comes forward a little, and speaks to young Euphemon behind the scene.*] Come forth.

SCENE

S C E N E VI.

Old EUPHEMON, Young EUPHEMON, LISE.

Eup. Good heaven ! what do I see ?

Young Eup. [*Kneeling.*] My father ! O, fir, know me, acknowledge me, decide my fate, for life or death depends upon a word.

Old Eup. What cou'd bring you hither at this time ?

Young Eup. Repentance, love, and nature.

Lise. [*Kneeling with young Euphemon.*] At your feet behold your children. Yes, fir, we have the same sentiments, the same heart.

Young Eup. [*Pointing to Lise.*] Alas ! her tender kindness has pardon'd all my offences : O, gracious fir, follow the example which love has set, and forgive your unhappy son ; driv'n as I was to despair, all I hop'd for was to die belov'd by her and you ; and if I live, I will live to deserve it. You turn away from me ; what is it, fir, that transports you thus ! I see your heart is mov'd . is it with hatred ? is your wretched son condemn'd——

Old Eup. [*Raising up his son, and embracing him.*] 'Tis love ; 'tis tenderness : I forgive thee : if thou art restor'd to virtue, I am still thy father.

Lise. And I thy wife. O, fir, long since our hearts were united ; permit us at your feet to renew our vows : it is not your riches he asks of you, he brings you now a heart too pure for such a wish ; he wants nothing : if he is virtuous, I have enough for both, and he shall have it all.

S C E N E VII.

To them RONDON, M. de CROUPILLAC, FIER-
ENFAT, Bailiff's Follower, Attendants.

Fier. Yonder he is, talking to her still ; let us shew ourselves men of courage, and take him by surprise.

L 2

Ren.

Ron. Ay, let us be bold, we are six to one.

Life. [*To Rondon.*] Now, fir, open your eyes, and see who it is I love.

Ron. 'Tis he !

Fier. Who ?

Life. Your brother.

Old Eup. The same, fir.

Fier. You are pleas'd to jest, fir: this scoundrel my brother ?

Life. Yes, fir.

M. de Croup. Upon my honour ! I am very glad to hear it.

Ron. What wonderful metamorphosis; why this is my droll valet.

Fier. So, so, I play a pretty extraordinary part here: why, what brother is this ? ha !

Old Eup. He is your brother, fir ; I had lost him ; but heaven and repentance has restor'd him to me.

M. de Croup. And luckily enough for me.

Fier. The rascal is come back only to take away my wife from me.

Young Eup. 'Tis fit, fir, that you know me ; [*to Fier-enfat,*] and let me tell you, fir, 'twas you took her from me, not I from you. In better days I had her heart: the folly of rash and unexperienc'd youth depriv'd me of a treasure which I did not know the value of: but on this happy day I have found again my virtue, my mistress, and my father: the rights of blood and the rights of love are at once restor'd to me, and perhaps you envy me the sudden, the unexpected blessings. But take my inheritance ; I give it you freely: you are fond of riches, and I of her: thus shall both be happy ; you in my possessions, and I in my Life's heart.

Old Eup. His disinterested goodness shall not be thus rewarded. No, Euphemon, thou shalt not be so unworthy of her.

Ron. Very good ; very fine indeed !

M. de Croup. For my part, I'm astonish'd, and yet not displeas'd: 'tis a comfort to me to think the gentleman is come on purpose to revenge, as it were, my charms. Quick, quick, fir; [*To Euphemon.*] marry her as soon

as possible ; heav'n is on your side, and to be sure made that lady on purpose for you ; you were born for each other ; and, by this lucky accident, 'tis ten to one if I don't recover my President.

Life. With all my heart. You, my dear father, [*To Rondon,*] will permit my faithful heart, which can be given but to one, to return to its right owner.

Ron. Why—if his brain is not quite so much turn'd, and——

Life. O, I'll answer for him.

Ron. If he loves you ; if he is prudent——

Life. O doubt it not.

Ron. And if Euphemon will give him a good fortune, why—I agree.

Fier. To be sure I am a great gainer in this affair, by finding a new brother ; but when I lose my wedding expences, my fortune, and a wife into the bargain.—

M. de Croup. For shame, thou sordid wretch, for ever in pursuit of riches ! have not I, in notes, bonds, and houses, enough to live upon, and more, much more, than you deserve ! Am I not your first love ! Did'st thou not swear fidelity to me ? Have not I it all under your own hand ? Your madrigals without sense, your songs without wit, your promises without meaning ? But we'll try it all at law, sir : I'll produce them in a court of justice ; and the parliament, in such a case, I am sure, ought to make an act on purpose to punish ingratitude.

Ron. My good friend, take care of yourself, and tremble at her resentment : let me advise you to marry, if it be only to get shut of her.

Old Eup. [*To M. de Croupillac,*] I am surpris'd at the passion you express for my son ; methinks even the suit you threaten him with must sooth his vanity ; the cause of your anger does him too much honour : but permit me to address myself to the dear object that has restor'd my son. Be united, my children, and embrace as brothers : and you, my friend, [*Turning to Rondon*] must return thanks to

heav'n, whose goodness hath done all for the best
And henceforth,

Of youth misguided, let us learn, whate'er
Their follies threaten, never to despair.

END of the FIFTH and LAST ACT.





M E R O P E.

A

T R A G E D Y.

Represented in 1743.



L 4

RECEIVED

FOR P. E.

T. R. A. G. D. Y.

Received in 1915

RECEIVED



A

L E T T E R

FROM THE

Jesuit TOURNMINE to Father BRUMOY,

ON

The TRAGEDY of MEROPE.

Rev. FATHER,

THE *Merope* which you desir'd to be return'd last night, I have sent you this morning at eight o'clock. I have taken time to read it with attention. Whatever success the fluctuating taste of *Paris* may think proper to bestow on it, I am satisfy'd, that posterity will applaud it as one of our best performances, and indeed as the model of true tragedy. *Aristotle*, the legislator of the stage, has alloted to *Merope* the first rank amongst the fine subjects for tragedy. It is treated by *Euripides*, we know, and in such a manner, as we learn from *Aristotle*, that whenever his *Cresphontes* was exhibited at

Athens, that ingenious people, who were accustomed to the finest dramatic performances, were struck, ravish'd and transported in the most extraordinary manner. If the taste of *Paris* should not correspond with that of *Athens*, we know which is to be blamed. The *Cresphontes* of *Euripides* is lost; Mr. *Voltaire* has restored it to us. You, my dear Sir, who have given us an *Euripides* in *French*, exactly as he appeared to admiring *Greece*, have acknowledged in the *Merope* of our illustrious friend, the natural, the simple, and the pathetic of *Euripides*. Mr. *Voltaire* has preserved the simplicity of the subject, has not only disencumbered it from superfluous episodes, but from many unnecessary scenes also: the danger of *Ægisthus* alone fills the stage: the interest increases from scene to scene, till we come to the catastrophe, the surprise of which is managed and prepared with the greatest art. We expect it indeed from the grand-son of *Alcides*. Every thing passes upon the stage as it did in *Mycenæ*. The theatrical strokes are not forced and unnatural; or such as, by their great degree of the marvellous, shock all probability: they arise entirely from the subject: it is the historical event represented to us in the most lively manner. It is impossible not to be deeply mov'd and affected by that scene where *Narbas* arrives, at the very instant when *Merope* is going to sacrifice her son, on a supposition that she is about to revenge him: or by that scene, where she has no other means of saving him from inevitable death, than by discovering him to the tyrant. The fifth act equals, if not surpasses, any of those few excellent last acts, which our stage has to boast of. Every thing passes without; notwithstanding which the author has so artfully and judiciously

ously contrived, as to bring all the action before us: the narration by *Ismenia* is not one of those studied artificial pieces, which are foreign to the subject; where the poet's wit is made to shine out of its place, such as throw an air of coldness and insipidity over the whole fable. This is nothing but action throughout. The trouble, and agitation visible in *Ismenia*, are expressive of the tumult she describes. I say nothing of the versification, which is more clear and beautiful, than any I remember to have seen, even in *Voltaire*, who is certainly an excellent poet*: all those, in short, who feel an honest indignation at the corruption and depravity of our present taste; all who have at heart the reformation of our stage; who wish that, by a careful imitation of the *Greeks*, whom in many perfections of the drama we have surpassed, we might endeavour to obtain the true end and design of it, by making the theatre, what it might be made, the school of virtue: all those, who think thus rationally and seriously, must be pleased to see so great and celebrated a poet as *Voltaire* employing his fine talents in such a tragedy as this, without love in it.

He has not imprudently hazarded the success of so noble a design; but in the place of love has substituted sentiments of virtue, which are not less

* The *French* Sentence is as follows: "Je ne parle point de la *versification*; le poete, admirable *versificateur*, s'est surpassé; jamais la *versification* ne fut plus belle & plus claire:" which, literally translated, would run thus: "I say nothing of the *versification*; the poet, an admirable *versifyer*, has surpassed himself; never was his *versification* so beautiful and so clear." Here we see the words *versifyer* and *versification* repeated no less than three times in three lines. An English ear is too delicate to admit of this. I have been frequently obliged to vary the turn and expression of the sentence, to avoid this repetition of the same word, which *Voltaire* himself is often guilty of, though, in general, a correct writer.

less forcible. As much prejudiced as we are in favour of tragedies founded on love intrigues, it is nevertheless true, (and we have often observed it) that those tragedies which have met with the greatest success, were not indebted to their love scenes for it: on the other hand, all our good critics allow, that romantic gallantry has disgraced and degraded our stage, and some of our best writers also. The great *Corneille* was sensible of this; he submitted, not without reluctance, to the reigning taste of the age; not venturing to banish love entirely, he went at least so far as to banish successful love: he would not permit it to appear weak or mean, but rais'd it even to heroism, choosing rather to go beyond nature, than to sink it into a too tender and contagious passion.

Thus, Rev. Father, have I sent you that judgment which your illustrious friend seem'd desirous of: I wrote it in haste, which is a proof of my regard; but the paternal friendship which I have had for him, even from his infancy, hath not so far prevail'd as to blind me in his favour. You will let him see what I have wrote. I have the honour to be, my dear friend, my dear son, the glory of your father, as I ever must be, sincerely your's.

Dec. 23, 1738.

TOURNEMINE.

A L E T-



A

L E T T E R

T O T H E

MARQUIS SCIPIO MAFFEI,

Author of the ITALIAN MEROPE,
and many other celebrated Performances.

SIR,

THE *Greeks and Romans*, to whom modern *Italy*, as well as all other nations, is indebted for almost every thing, dedicated their works, without the ridiculous form of compliments, to their friends, who were masters of the art: by this claim I take the liberty of addressing to you the *French Merope*.

The *Italians*, who have been the restorers of almost all the fine arts, and the inventors of many, were the first, who, under the auspices of *Leo the Tenth*, revived tragedy; and you, Sir, are the first who, in this age, when the *Sophoclean* art became enervated by love-intrigues, often foreign to the subject, and as often debased by idle buffoonries, that reflected dishonour on the
the

the taste of your ingenious countrymen, you, Sir, were the first who had courage and genius enough to hazard a tragedy without gallantry, a tragedy worthy of Athens in its glory; wherein the maternal affection constitutes the whole intrigue, and the most tender interest arises from the purest virtue. *France* prides itself in her *Athaliah*: it is indeed the master-piece of our stage, perhaps of poetry itself: of all the pieces that are exhibited amongst us, it is the only one where love is not introduced: but, at the same time, we must allow that it is supported by the pomp of religion, and that majesty of eloquence which appears in the prophets. You had not that resource, and yet you have so contrived, as to furnish out five acts, which it is so extremely difficult to fill up without episodes. I must own, your subject appeared to me much more interesting and tragical than that of *Athaliah*; and even if our admirable *Racine* had worked up his master-piece with more art, more poetry, and more sublimity than he has, your's, I am satisfied, would have drawn more tears from the audience.

The preceptor of *Alexander*, (kings ought always to have such preceptors) the great *Aristotle*, that extensive genius, so just, and so deeply versed in all the learning of those times, *Aristotle*, in his Art of Poetry, has declared that the meeting of *Merope* and her son was the most interesting circumstance of the whole *Grecian* theatre. This stroke was, in his opinion, infinitely superior to all the rest. *Plutarch* tells us, that the *Greeks*, who, of all the people in the world, had the quickest feeling, trembled with fear, lest the old man, who was to stop the arm of *Merope* should not come time enough. That piece, which was played in his time, and a few frag-

ments

ments of which are still extant, appeared to him the most affecting of all the tragedies of *Euripides*; but it was not the choice of his subject alone to which that poet owed his success, though in every species of the drama, a happy choice is, no doubt, of the greatest service.

France has seen several *Meropes*, but none of them ever succeeded: the authors perhaps overloaded this simple subject with foreign ornaments: it was the naked *Venus* of *Praxiteles* which they wanted to cover with tinsel. It requires a great deal of time to teach men, that every thing which is great should be simple and natural. In 1641, when the *French* stage began to flourish, and even to raise itself above that of *Greece*, by the genius of *P. Corneille*, Cardinal *Richelieu*, who ambitiously sought for glory of every kind, and who had just then built a magnificent hall, for theatrical representations, in the *Palais Royal*, of which he had himself furnished the design, had a *Merope* played there under the name of *Telephonte*; the plot of it is generally believed to have been intirely his own. There are above a hundred verses in it, supposed to be written by him; the rest was by *Colletet*, *Bois-Roberts*, *Démarets*, and *Chapelain*; but all the power of Cardinal *Richelieu* could not impart to those writers that genius which they never possessed: his own was not indeed adapted to the stage, though he had a good taste; so that all he could do, or that could be expected from him, was to patronise and encourage the great *Corneille*.

Mr. *Gilbert*, resident of the celebrated queen *Christina*, in 1643, gave us his *Merope*, which is at present as little known as the other. *La Chapelle*, of the *French* academy, author of a
tragedy

tragedy called *Cleopatra*, which was played with some success, gave us another *Merope* in 1683, and took care to insert a love episode: he complains withal in his preface, that the critics reproach'd him with too great a degree of the marvellous; but he was mistaken, it was not the marvellous that sunk his performance, but in reality the want of genius, added to the coldness and insipidity of his versification: this is the great point, the capital fault, that condemns so many poems to oblivion.

The art of eloquence in verse is of all arts the most difficult and the most uncommon: there are a thousand geniusses to be found, who can plan a work, and put it into verse after the common manner; but to treat it like a true poet, is a talent which is seldom bestowed on above two or three men on the face of the whole earth.

In December 1701, M. de la Grange played his *Amasis*, which is nothing more than the subject of *Merope* under another name. Gallantry has its share in this performance likewise; and there is more of the marvellous in it, even than in *la Chapelle's*: but it is more interesting, conducted with more art and genius, and written with more warmth and power; notwithstanding which, it met with no great success;

Et habent sua fata libelli.

Since that however, it has been revived with great applause; and is one of those few pieces which generally gives pleasure in the representation.

Before and after *Amasis* we have had several tragedies, on subjects very nearly resembling this, wherein a mother is going to revenge the death of her son on the son himself, and discovers him just at the instant when she was about to kill him.

We

We frequently saw on our stage that striking but rarely probable situation, wherein a person comes with a poignard in his hand ready to destroy his enemy, and another arrives at the same instant, and snatches it from him. This incident recommended, at least for a time, the *Camma*, of *Thomas Corneille*.

But amongst all the tragedies on this subject, which I have here enumerated, there is not one of them but what is filled with some episode of love, or rather gallantry; for every thing must give way to the reigning taste. But you must not believe, Sir, that this unhappy custom of loading our tragedies with ridiculous love intrigues was owing to *Racine*; a crime, which, in *Italy*, I know he is generally reproach'd with: on the contrary, he did every thing in his power to reform the public taste in this particular: the passion of love is never brought in by him as a mere episode; it is the foundation or ground-plot of all his pieces, and forms the principal interest: it is certainly of all the passions the most truly theatrical, the most fruitful in sentiments, and admits of the greatest variety: it ought therefore no doubt, to be the soul of a dramatic performance, or entirely to be banished from it: if love is not tragical, it is insipid; and when it is tragical, it should reign alone; it was never made for a second place. It was *Rotrou*, or rather we must own the great *Corneille* himself, who, in his creation of the stage, at the same time disfigur'd and disgrac'd it, by those ridiculous intrigues, bespoken as it were, and made on purpose, those affairs of gallantry, which, not being true passions, were unworthy of the stage: if you would know *the reason* why *Corneille's* tragedies
are

are so seldom play'd the reason is plain enough : it is because, in his *Otho*,

“ *Otho* makes a compliment to his mistress more like a man of wit than a real lover : he follows step by step the effort of his memory, which it is much more easy to admire than to believe. *Camilla* herself seem'd to be of this opinion ; she would have liked much better a discourse less study'd—Tell me then, when *Otho* made love to *Camilla*, was he contented, or was she kind ?”

It is because, in *Pompey*, *Cleopatra* (a useless character) says that *Cæsar*.

“ Sighs for her, and in a plaintive stile calls himself her captive, even in the field of victory.”

It is because *Cæsar* asks *Antony*, “ *If he has seen this adorable queen.*” to which *Antony* replies,* “ *Yes, my lord, I have seen her, she is incomparable.*”

It is because in *Sertorius*, old *Sertorius* falls in love, not only because he likes the lady, but with a political view, and cries out,

“ I love : but it suits my age so ill to be in love, that I even conceal it from the fair one who has charm'd me. As I know that the deep and yellow wrinkles on my forehead can have no great pow'r in captivating the senses.”

It is because, in *Oedipus*, *Theseus* begins by saying to *Dirce*, “ whatever dreadful havoc the plague

* The French is,

Oui, Seigneur, je l'ai vûe, elle est incomparable.

Conversation of this kind, as *Voltaire* intimates, is much too low and familiar for the dignity of tragedy : but its being labour'd into verse at the same time doubtless makes it still more ridiculous. One would scarce indeed have imagin'd, that the boasted *Cornille* could ever have written such contemptible stuff as the lines here quoted.

plague may make here, absence to true lovers is far more dreadful."

In a word, it is because such love as this will never make us shed tears; and when that passion does not affect us, it must be quite insipid.

I have said no more here, sir, than what all good judges, and men of taste, say to one another every day; what you have often heard at my house; in short, what every body thinks, but none dare to publish: you know well enough the nature of mankind: half the world write in opposition to their own opinions, for fear of shocking receiv'd prejudices and vulgar errors. With regard to myself, who have never mix'd any political reserve with my sentiments on literature, I speak the truth boldly, and will add, that I respect *Corneille* more, and have a higher opinion of the real merit of this great father of the stage, than those who praise him indiscriminately, and are blind to all his faults.

* A *Merope* was exhibited at *London* in 1731: who wou'd have thought a love intrigue shou'd ever have been thought of at that time? But ever since the reign of *Charles II.* love has taken possession of the English stage; though there is not a nation upon earth by whom that passion is so ill painted; but the intrigue so absurdly brought in, and so badly treated, is the least fault of the *English Merope*. The young *Ægisthus*, deliver'd out of prison by a maid of honour, who is in love

* Notwithstanding what Mr. *Voltaire* has here asserted, concerning an *English Merope*, acted at *London* in 1731, I cannot, by all the enquiry I have made amongst persons concern'd in the theatres at that time, discover any such tragedy was ever exhibited, and imagine it must therefore have been a mistake of Mr. *Voltaire's*, whose veracity in cases of this nature, is not always to be depended on.

love with him, is brought before the queen, who presents him with a bowl of poison, and a dagger, and speaks thus to him: "If you don't swallow the poison, this dagger shall put an end to your mistress's life." The young man drinks the poison, and is carry'd off in the agonies of death: he comes back in the fifth act, coldly to inform *Merope* that he is her son, and that he has slain the tyrant. *Merope* asks him how this miracle was perform'd: to which he replies, that a friend of the maid of honour had put poppy-water, instead of poison, into the cup. "I was only asleep (says he) when they thought me dead; I learn'd, when I awoke, that I was your son, and immediately kill'd the tyrant." Thus ends the tragedy; no doubt but it met with a bad reception: but is it not strange that it should ever have been represented? Is it not a proof that the *English* stage is not yet refin'd? It seems as if the same cause that deprives the *English* of any excellency in, or genius for music and painting, takes from them also all perfection in tragedy. This island, which has produc'd the finest philosophers in the world, is not equally productive of the fine arts; and if the * *English* do not seriously apply themselves to the study of those

* Poor *England*! depriv'd in one short sentence of all taste and genius for music, painting and dramatic poetry; an island of savages and barbarians: cou'd one have expected a censure so cruel and unjust from a writer of so much merit as *Voltaire*? A few lines before he had told us, that there is not a nation upon earth wherein love is so ill painted as by the *English* writers. Did Mr. *Voltaire* never hear of such persons as *Rowe*, *Otway*, or *Southern*? But such is the force of prejudice, that nothing can get the better of it; and yet this inconsistent censurer (for such we must esteem him,) can boast in the very next page, that *his love to his own country has never shut his eyes against the merit of foreigners.*

Nemo fuit unquam

Tam dispar sibi

those precepts which were given them by their excellent countrymen, *Addison* and *Pope*, they will never come near to other nations in point of taste and literature.

But whilst the subject of *Merope* has been thus disgrac'd and disfigur'd in one part of *Europe*, it has met with better fate in *Italy*, where it has for a long time been treated in the true taste of the ancients. In the sixteenth century, which will be famous throughout all ages, the count de *Torelli* gave us his *Merope* with chorusses. If in *La Chapelle's* tragedy we find all the faults of the *French* stage, such as useless intrigues, episodes, and a romantic air; and in the *English* author the highest degree of indecency, barbarism, and absurdity; we likewise meet in the *Italian* with all the faults of the *Greek* theatre, such as the want of action, and declamation. You, sir, have avoided all the rocks which they split upon; you, who have done honour to your country, by complete models of more than one kind, you have given us in your *Merope* an example of a tragedy that is at once both simple and interesting.

The moment I read I was struck with it; my love to my own country hath never shut my eyes against the merit of foreigners. On the other hand, the more regard I have for, the more I endeavour to enrich it, by the addition of treasures that are not of its own growth. The desire which I had of translating your *Merope*, was increas'd by the honour of a personal acquaintance with you at *Paris*, in the year 1733. By loving the author, I became still more enamour'd with his work; but when I sat down to it, I found it was impossible to bring it on the *French* stage. We are grown excessively delicate: like the *Sybarites* of old, we are so immers'd in luxury, that
we

we cannot bear that rustic simplicity, and that description of a country life, which you have imitated from the *Greek* theatre. I am afraid our audiences would not suffer young *Ægisthus* to make a present of his ring to the man that stops him. I could not have ventur'd to seize upon a hero, and take him for a robber; tho', at the same time, the circumstances he is in authorises the mistake. Our manners, which probably admit of many things which your's do not, would not permit us to represent the tyrant, the murtherer of *Merope's* husband and children, pretending, after fifteen years, to be in love with her; nor could I even have dared to make the queen say to him, *why did not you talk to me of love before, when the bloom of youth was yet on my face?* Conversations of this kind are natural; but our pit, which at some times is so indulgent, and at others so nice and delicate, would think them perhaps too familiar, and might even discover coquetry, where, in reality, there might be nothing but what was just and proper. Our stage would by no means have suffer'd *Merope* to bind her son to a pillar, nor to run after him with a javelin, and an axe in her hand, nor have permitted the young man to run away from her twice, and beg his life of the tyrant: much less could we have suffer'd the confidante of *Merope* to have persuaded *Ægisthus* to go to sleep on the stage, merely to give the queen an opportunity of coming there to assassinate him: not but all this is natural: but you must pardon us for expecting that nature should always be presented to us with some strokes of art; strokes that are extremely different at *Paris* from those which we meet with at *Verona*.

To

To give you a proper idea of the different taste and judgment of polite and cultivated nations, with regard to the same arts, permit me here to quote a few passages from your own celebrated performance, which seem dictated by pure nature. The person who stops young *Cressphontes*, and takes the ring from him, says,

Or dunque in tuo paese i servi
Han di coteste gemme? un bel paese
Sia questo tuo; nel nostro una tel gemma
Ad un dito real non sconverebbe.

I will take the liberty to translate this into blank verse, in which your tragedy is written, as I have not time at present to work it into rhyme,

Have slaves such precious jewels where thou
liv'st?

Sure 'tis a noble country; for, with us,
Such rings might well adorn a royal hand.

The tyrant's confidante tells him, when speaking of the queen, who refuses, after twenty years, to marry the known murderer of her family,

La Donna, come sai, ricusa e brama.

Women, we know, refuse when most they love. The queen's waiting woman answers the tyrant, who presses her to use her influence in his favour, thus:

——diffimulato in vano
Soffre di febre assalto: alquanti giorni
Donare è forza a rinfrancar suoi spiriti.

The queen, sir, has a fever, 'tis in vain
To hide it, and her spirits are oppress'd;
She must have time to recollect them.

In your fourth act, old *Polidore* asks one of *Merope's* courtiers who he is? To which he replies,

plies, I am *Eurises*, the son of *Nicander*; *Polidore* then, speaking of *Nicander*, talks in the stile of *Homer's Nestor*.

—————Egli era humano
 Eliberal, quando appariva, tutti
 Faceangli honor; io mi ricordo ancora
 Diquanto ei festeggiò con bella pompa:
 Le sue nozze con *Silvia*, ch'era figlia
 D' *Olimpia* edì *Glicon* fratel d' *Ipparcho*.
 Ju dunque fir quel fanciullin che in corte
Silvia condur solea quasi per pompa:
 Parmi' l'altir hieri: O quanto siete presti,
 Quanto voi v' affrettate, O giovinetti,
 A farvi adulti ed à gridar tacendo
 Che noi diam loco!

The most humane, most gen'rous of mankind,
 Where'er he went, respected and belov'd:
 O I remember well the feast he gave
 When to his *Sylvia* wedded, the fair daughter
 Of *Glycon*, brother of the brave *Hipparchus*,
 And chaste *Olympia*: and art thou that infant
 Whom *Sylvia* to the court so often brought,
 And fondly in her arms? alas! methinks
 It was but yesterday: how quickly youth
 Shoots up, and tells us we must quit the scene!

In another place the same old man, being invited to the ceremony of the queen's marriage, says:

—————Oh curioso
 Punto io non son, passò stagione. Assai
 Veduti ho sacrificii; iò mi ricordo
 Di quello ancora quando il rè *Cresphonte*
 Incomincio à regnar. Quella fù pompa.
 Ora più non si fanno a questi tempi
 Di cotai sacrificii. Più di cento

Fur le beste sivenate i sacerdoti
 Risplendean tutti, ed ove ti volgeffi
 Altro non si vedea che argento ed oro.

My time is past, and curiosity
 Is now no more : already I have seen
 Enough of nuptial rites, enough of pomp
 And sacrifice : I still remember well
 The great solemnity, when king *Cresphontes*
 Began his reign : O 'twas a noble sight !
 We cannot boast of such in these our days ;
 A hundred beasts were offer'd up, the priests
 In all their splendor shone, and nought was seen
 But gold and silver——

All these strokes are natural, all agreeable to the characters and manners represented : such familiar dialogues would, no doubt, have been well receiv'd at *Athens* ; but *Paris* and our pit expect a simplicity of another kind. We may, perhaps, even boast of a more refined taste than *Athens* itself, where, though the principal city of all *Greece*, it does not appear to me that they ever represented any theatrical pieces except on the four solemn festivals ; whereas at *Paris* there is always more than one every day in the year. At *Athens* the number of the citizens was computed at only ten thousand, and *Paris* has near eight hundred thousand inhabitants ; amongst whom, I suppose, we may reckon thirty thousand judges of dramatic performances, and who really do pass their judgments almost every day of their lives.

In your tragedy you took the liberty to translate that elegant and simple comparison from *Virgil*.

Qualis populeâ mærens Philomela sub umbra
 Amissos queritur fœtus, &c.

VOL. XXII.

M

But

But if I were to take the same in mine, they would say it was fitter for an epic poem : such a rigid master have we to please in what we call the public :

Nescis, heu ! nescis nostra fastidia Romæ :
Et pueri nasum Rhinocerotis habent.

The *English* have a custom of finishing almost all their acts with a simile, but we expect that, in a tragedy, the hero should talk, and not a poet. Our audience is of opinion, that in an important crisis of affairs, in a council, in a violent passion, or a pressing danger, princes and ministers should never make poetical comparisons.

How could I ever venture to make the under characters talk together for a long time ? With you, those conversations serve to prepare interesting scenes between the principal actors : they are like the avenues to a fine palace : but our spectators are for coming into it at once. We must therefore comply with the national taste, which is, perhaps, grown more difficult from having been cloy'd, as it were, with such a variety of fine performances : and yet amongst these recitals, which our excessive severity condemns, how many beauties do I regret the loss of ! How does simple nature delight me, though beneath a form that appears strange to us !

I have here, sir, given you some of those reasons which prevailed on me not to follow what I so much admired. I was obliged, not without regret, to write a new *Merope* : I have done it in a different manner ; but I am far from thinking that I have therefore done it better. I look upon myself, with regard to you, as a traveller to whom an eastern monarch had made a present of some very rich stuffs : the king would certainly permit this
traveller

traveller to wear them according to the fashion of his own country.

My *Merope* was finished in the beginning of the year 1736, pretty nearly as it now stands; studies of another kind prevented me from bringing it on the stage: but what weighed most with me was, the hazard which I ran in producing it, after several successful pieces on almost the same subject, though under different names. At length, however, I ventured to produce it, and the public gave me a convincing proof, that they could condescend to see the same matter worked up in a different manner. That happened to our stage which we see every day in a gallery of pictures, where there are many of them on exactly the same subject. The judges are pleased by the observation of these different manners, and every one marks down and enjoys, according to his own taste, the character of every painter. This is a kind of happy concurrence, which, at the same time that it contributes towards the perfection of the Art, gives the public a better insight into it. If the *French Merope* has met with the same success as the *Italian*, it is to you, sir, I am indebted for it; to that simplicity in your performance which I have taken for my model, and which I was always an admirer of. Though I walked in a different path, you were always my guide. I could have wished, after the examples of the *Italians* and *English*, to employ the happy facility of blank verse, and have often called to mind this passage of *Rucellai*

Tu sai purchè l' imagine della voce
Che risponde da i sassi, dove l' echo alberga.
Sempre nemica fu del nostro regno,
E fù inventrice delle prime rime.

M 2

But

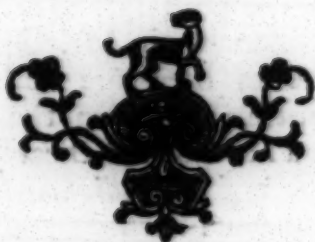
But I am satisfied, as I have long since declared, that such an attempt would never succeed in *France*, and it would be rather a mark of weakness than good sense, to endeavour to shake off a yoke which so many authors have borne, whose works will last as long as the nation itself. Our poetry has none of those liberties which yours has, and this is perhaps one of the reasons why the *Italians* got the start of us, by three or four centuries, in this most difficult and most delightful art.

As I have endeavoured to imitate you in tragedy, I should be glad to follow your example in other branches of literature, for which you are so eminently distinguished: I could wish to form my taste by yours in the science of history: I do not mean the empty barren knowledge of dates and facts, that only informs us at what period of time a man died, who perhaps was a useless or a pernicious member of society; the science of a dictionary, that loads the memory without improving the mind: I mean that history of the human heart which teaches us men and manners, which leads us from error to error, and from prejudice to prejudice, into the effects of the various passions and affections that agitate mankind: which shews us all the evils that ignorance, or knowledge misapplied, have produced in the world; and which above all, gives us a clue to the progress of the arts, and follows them through the dangers of so many contending powers, and the ruin of so many empires.

It is this which makes history delightful; and it becomes still more so to me, by the place which you will possess amongst those who have pleased and instructed mankind. It will raise the emulation of posterity, to hear that your country has bestowed

bestowed on you the most signal honours, that *Verona* has raised a statue, with this inscription, **TO THE MARQUIS SCIPIO MAFFEI** IN HIS LIFE TIME. An inscription as beautiful in its kind as that at Montpellier to LEWIS XIV. *after his death.*

Deign, sir, to accept, with the respects of your fellow citizens, those of a stranger, who esteems and honours you as much as if he had been born at *Verona.*



M 3

A LET-



A

L E T T E R

F R O M

Mr. de la LINDELLE to Mr. de VOLTAIRE.

S I R,

YOU had the politeness to dedicate your tragedy of *Merope* to Mr. *Maffei*, and have served the cause of literature both in *Italy* and *France*, by pointing out, from the perfect knowledge which you have of the theatre, the different rules and conduct of the *Italian* and *French* stages. The partial attachment which you have to every thing that comes from *Italy*, added to your particular regard for Mr. *Maffei*, would not permit you to censure the real faults of that excellent writer; but as I have myself nothing in view but truth, and the advancement of the arts, I shall not be afraid to speak the sentiments of the judicious public, and which I am satisfied must be yours also.

The Abbé *Desfontaines* had already remarked some palpable errors in the *Merope* of Mr. *Maffei*: but, according to his usual manner, with more rudeness than justice: he has mingled a few good criticisms with many bad ones. This satyrist, so
universally

universally decry'd, had neither knowledge enough of the *Italian* tongue, nor taste enough to form an equitable judgment.

This then is the opinion of the most judicious, amongst those literati whom I have consulted, both in *France* and on the other side of the *Alps*. *Merope* appears to every one of them, past dispute, the most interesting and truly tragic subject that was ever brought on the stage, infinitely beyond that of *Athaliah*; because *Athaliah* does not want to assassinate the young king, but is deceived by the High-Priest, who seeks revenge on her for her former crimes: whereas in *Merope* we see a mother, who, in revenging her son, is on the point of murdering that very son himself, her only desire, and her only hope: the interest of *Merope* therefore affects us in a very different manner from that of *Athaliah*: but it seems as if Mr. *Maffei* was satisfy'd with what the subject naturally suggested to him, without making use of any theatrical art in the conduct of it.

1. The scenes, in many places, are not linked together, and the stage is left void; a fault which, in the present age, is looked upon as unpardonable, even in the lowest class of dramatic writers.

2. The actors frequently come in and go out without reason; a fault no less considerable.

3. There is no probability, no dignity, no decorum, no art in the dialogue: in the very first scene we see a tyrant reasoning in the calmest manner with *Merope*, whose husband and children he had murdered, and making love to her: this would have been hissed at *Paris*, even by the poorest judges.

4. Whilst the tyrant is thus ridiculously making love to the old queen, word is brought that

they have found a young man who had committed murder ; but it does not appear through the whole course of the play who it was he had killed : he pretends it was a thief, who wanted to steal his cloaths. How low, little, and poor, is this ? it would not be borne in a farce at a country fair.

5. The captain of the guard, provost, or whatever you call him, examines the murtherer, who has a fine ring upon his finger : this scene is quite low comedy, and the style is agreeable to it, and worthy of the scene.

6. The mother immediately supposes that the robber, who was killed, is her son. It is pardonable, no doubt, in a mother to fear every thing ; but a queen, who is a mother, should have required better proofs.

7. In the midst of all these fears, the tyrant *Poliphontes* reasons with *Merope's* waiting-woman about his pretended passion. These cold and indecent scenes which are only brought in to fill up the act, would never be suffer'd on a regular stage. You have only, sir, modestly taken notice of one of these scenes, where *Merope's* woman desires the tyrant not to hasten the nuptials ; because, she says, her mistress has *an attack of a fever* : but I, sir, will boldly aver, in the name of all the critics, that such a conversation, and such an answer, are only fit for *Harlequin's* theatre.

8. I will add moreover, that when the queen, imagining her son to be dead, tells us she longs to pull the heart out the murtherer's breast, and tear it with her teeth, she talks more like a *Cannibal* than an afflicted mother ; and that decency should be preserv'd in every thing.

9. *Ægisthus*, who was brought in as a robber, and who had said that he had himself been attacked, is taken for a thief a second time, and carried before

before the queen, in spite of the king who notwithstanding undertakes to defend him. The queen binds him to a pillar, is going to kill him with a dart; but, before she throws it, asks him some questions. *Ægisthus* tells her, that his father is an old man, upon which the queen immediately relents. Is not this an excellent reason for changing her mind, and imagining that *Ægisthus* might be her own son? a most indisputable mark to be sure: is it so very extraordinary that a young man should have an old father? *Maffei* has added this absurdity, this deficiency of art and genius, to another even more ridiculous, which he had made in his first edition. *Ægisthus* says to the queen, "O *Polydore*, my father." This *Polydore* was the very man to whom *Merope* had entrusted the care of *Ægisthus*. At hearing the name of *Polydore*, the queen could no longer doubt that *Ægisthus* was her son: thus the piece was entirely at an end. This error was remov'd; but remov'd, we see, only to make room for a greater.

10. Whilst the queen is thus ridiculously, and without any reason, in suspense, occasioned by the mention of an old man, the tyrant comes in, and takes *Ægisthus* under his protection. The young man, who should have been represented as a hero, thanks the king for his life, with a base and mean submission that is disgusting, and entirely degrades the character of *Ægisthus*.

11. At length *Merope* and the tyrant are left together: *Merope* exhausts her resentment in reproaches without end. Nothing can be more cold and lifeless than these scenes, full of declamation, that have no plot, interest, or contrasted passion in them; they are school-boys' scenes: every thing in a play, that is without action, is useless.

12. There is so little art in this piece, that the author is always forced to employ confidents to fill up the stage. The fourth act begins with another cold and useless scene between the tyrant and the queen's waiting-woman : who, a little afterwards, lights, we know not how, on young *Ægisthus*, and persuades him to rest himself in the porch, merely to give the queen a fair opportunity of dispatching him when he falls asleep ; which he does according to promise. An excellent plot this ! and then the queen comes a second time, with an axe in her hand, in order to kill the young man, who is gone to sleep for that purpose. This circumstance, twice repeated, is surely the height of barrenness, as the young man's sleep is the height of ridicule. Mr. *Maffei* thinks there is genius and variety in this repetition, because the queen comes in the first time with a dart, and the second with an axe. What a strange effect of fancy !

13. At last old *Polydore* comes in *à propos*, and prevents the queen from striking the blow. One would naturally imagine, that this happy instant must produce a thousand affecting incidents between the mother and son ; but we meet with nothing of this kind : *Ægisthus* flies off, and sees no more of his mother : he has not so much as one scene with her. This betrays a want of genius that is insupportable. *Merope* asks the old man what recompence he demands ; and the old fool begs her to make him young again. In this manner the queen employs her time, which, doubtless she should have spent in running after her son : all this is low, ill-placed, and ridiculous to the last degree.

14. In the course of this piece the tyrant is always for espousing *Merope* ; and, to compass his end,

end, he bids her agents tell her, that he will murder all her servants, if she does not consent to give him her hand. What a ridiculous idea, and how extravagant a tyrant! Could not Mr. *Maffei* have found out a more specious pretext to save the honour of a queen, who had meanness enough to marry the murderer of her whole family?

15. Another childish college trick: the tyrant says to his confident, "I know the art of reigning; I'll put the bold and rebellious to death; give the reins to all kind of vice; invite my subjects to commit the most atrocious crimes, and pardon the most guilty; expose the good to the fury of the wicked, &c." Did ever man pronounce such vile stuff? This declaration of a *regent of sixteen*, doth it not give us a fine idea of a man who knows how to govern? *Racine* was condemned for having made *Mathan* (in his *Athaliah*) say too much against himself; and yet *Mathan* talks reasonably: but here it is to the last degree absurd to pretend, that throwing every thing into confusion is the art of ruling well; it is rather the art of dethroning himself. One cannot read any thing so ridiculous without laughing at it. Mr. *Maffei* is a strange politician.

In a word, sir, this work of *Maffei* is a fine subject, but a very bad performance. Every body at *Paris* agrees, that it would not go through one representation; and the sensible men in *Italy* have a very poor opinion of it. It is in vain the author has taken so much pains in his travels, to engage the worst writers he could pick up to translate his tragedy: it was much easier for him to pay a translator, than to make his piece a good one.



T H E
A N S W E R
O F

Mr. de VOLTAIRE to Mr. de la LINDELLE.

S I R,

TH E letter which you did me the honour to write to me entitles you to the name of *Hypercritic*, which was given to the famous *Scaliger*: you are truly a most redoubtable adversary: if you treat Mr. *Maffei* in this manner, what am I to expect from you? I acknowledge that, in many points, you have too much reason on your side. You have taken a great deal of pains to rake together a heap of brambles and briars; but why wou'd you not enjoy the pleasure of gathering a few flowers? there are certainly many in Mr. *Maffei*; and which, I dare affirm, will flourish for ever. Such are the scenes between the mother and son, and the narration of the catastrophe. I can't help thinking, that these strokes are affecting and pathetic. You say, the subject alone makes all the beauty; but was it not the same subject in other authors who have treated *Merope*? Why, with the same assistance, had they not the same success? Does not this single argument
prove,

prove, that Mr. *Maffei* owes as much to his genius as to his subject?

To be plain with you, I think Mr. *Maffei* has shewn more art than myself, in the manner by which he has contrived to make *Merope* think that her son is the murtherer of her son. I could not bring myself to make use of the ring as he did; because, after the *royal ring* that *Boileau* laughs at in his satires, this circumstance would always appear too trifling on our stage. We must conform to the fashions of our own age and nation; and, for the same reason, we ought not lightly to condemn those of foreigners.

Neither Mr. *Maffei* nor I have sufficiently explain'd the motives that should so strongly incline *Poliphontes* to espouse the queen. This is, perhaps, a fault inherent in the subject; but I must own I think this fault very inconsiderable, when the circumstances it produces are so interesting. The grand point is to affect and draw tears from the spectators. Tears were shed both at *Verona* and at *Paris*. This is the best answer that can be made to the critics. It is impossible to be perfect; but how meritorious is it to move an audience, in spite of all our imperfections! Most certain it is, that in *Italy* many things are passed over, which would not be pardoned in *France*: first, because taste, decorum, and the stage itself, is not the same in both; secondly, because the *Italians*, having no city where they represent dramatic pieces every day, cannot possibly be so used to things of this kind as ourselves. *Opera*, that splendid monster, has drove out *Melpomene* from among them; and there are so many of the *Castrati* there, that no room is left for *Roscus* and *Æsopus*: but if ever the *Italians* should have a regular theatre, I believe

believe they would soon get beyond us: their stages are more extensive, their language more tractable, their blank verses easier to be made, their nation possessed of more sensibility; but they want encouragement, peace, plenty, &c.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEROPE, Widow of Cresphontes, King of
Messene.

ÆGISTHUS, Son of Merope.

POLIPHONTES, Tyrant of Messene.

NARBAS, an old Man.

EURICLES, Favourite of Merope.

EROX, Favourite of Poliphontes.

ISMENIA, Confidant of Merope.

SCENE at MESSENE, in the Palace of Merope.



M E R O P E.

A

T R A G E D Y.

A C T I. S C E N E I.

ISMENIA, MEROPE.

If m. **L**ET not, great queen, thy soul for ever dwell
On images of horror and despair;
The storm is past, and brighter days succeed:
Long hast thou tasted heav'n's severest wrath,
Enjoy its bounties now: the gods, thou seest,
Have bless'd our land with victory and peace;
And proud Messene, after fifteen years
Of foul division and intestine wars,
Now from her ruins lifts her tow'ring front,
Superior to misfortune: now no more
Shalt thou behold her angry chiefs support
Their jarring int'rests, and in guilt alone
United, spread destruction, blood, and slaughter,
O'er half thy kingdom, and dispute the throne
Of good Cresphontes: but the ministers
Of heav'n, the guardians of our sacred laws,
The rulers, and the people, soon shall meet,
Free in their choice, to fix the pow'r supreme:

If

If virtue gives the diadem, 'tis thine :
 Thine by irrevocable right : to thee,
 The widow of Cresphontes, from our kings
 Descended, must devolve Messene's throne :
 Thou, whom misfortunes and firm constancy
 Have made but more illustrious, and more dear ;
 Thou, to whom ev'ry heart in secret ty'd——

Mer. No news of Narbas ! shall I never see
 My child again ?

Ism. Despair not, madam : slaves
 Have been dispatch'd on every side ; the paths
 Of Elis all are open to their search :
 Doubtless the object of your fears is plac'd
 In faithful hands, who will restore to you
 Their sacred trust.

Mer. Immortal gods ! who see
 My bitter griefs, will ye restore my son ?
 Is my Ægisthus living ? have you sav'd
 My wretched infant ? O preserve him still,
 And shield him from the cruel murth'rer's hand !
 He is your son, the pure, the spotless blood
 Of your Alcides. Will you not protect
 The dear dear image of the best of men,
 The best of kings, whose ashes I adore.

Ism. But wherefore must this tender passion turn
 Thy soul aside from ev'ry other purpose ?

Mer. I am a mother : can'st thou wonder yet ?

Ism. A mother's fondness shou'd not thus efface
 The duty of a queen, your character,
 And noble rank ; tho' in his infant years
 You lov'd this son, yet little have you seen
 Or known of him.

Mer. Not seen him, my Ismenia !
 O he is always present to my heart,
 Time has no pow'r to loose such bonds as these ;
 His danger still awakens all my fears,
 And doubles my affection : once I've heard
 From Narbas, and but once these four years past,
 And that alas ! but made me more unhappy.
 Ægisthus, then he told me, well deserves
 A better fate ; he's worthy of his mother,

And

And of the gods, his great progenitors;
 Expos'd to ev'ry ill, his virtue braves,
 And will surmount them: hope for ev'ry thing
 From him, but be aware of Poliphontes.

Ism. Prevent him then, and take the reins of empire
 In your own hands.

Mer. That empire is my son's:
 Perdition on the cruel step-mother,
 The lover of herself, the savage heart,
 That cou'd enjoy the pleasures of a throne,
 And disinherit her own blood! O no: Ismenia,
 If my Ægisthus lives not, what is empire,
 Or what is life to me! I shou'd renounce them.
 I shou'd have dy'd when my unhappy lord
 Was basely slain, by men and gods betray'd.
 O perfidy! O guilt! O! fatal day!
 O death! for ever present to my sight!
 Methinks ev'n now I hear the dismal shrieks,
 I hear them cry, 'O save the king, his wife,
 His sons:' I see the walls all stain'd with blood,
 The flaming palace, helpless women crush'd
 Beneath the smoking ruins, fear and tumult
 On ev'ry side, arms, torches, death, and horror:
 Then, roll'd in dust, and bathing in his blood,
 Cresphontes press'd me to his arms, uprais'd
 His dying eyes, and took his last farewell;
 Whilst his two hapless babes, the tender fruits
 Of our first love, thrown on the bleeding bosom
 Of their dead father, lifted up the hands
 Of innocence, and begg'd me to protect them
 Against the barb'rous murderers: Ægisthus
 Alone escap'd: some god defended him.
 O thou, who did'st protect his infancy
 Watch o'er and guard him, bring him to my eyes;
 O let him from inglorious solitude
 Rise to the rank of his great ancestors!
 I've borne his absence long, and groan'd in chains
 These fifteen years: now let Ægisthus reign
 Instead of Merope: for all my pains
 And sorrows past, be that the great reward.

SCENE

S C E N E II.

MEROPE, ISMENIA, EURICLES.

Mer. Well! what of Narbas, and my son?

Eur. Confus'd

I stand before thee; all our cares are vain;
We've search'd the banks of Peneus, and the fields
Of fair Olympia, even to the walls
Of proud Salmoneus, but no Narbas there
Is to be found or heard of, not a trace
Remaining of him.

Mer. Narbas is no more,
And all is lost.

Ism. Whate'er thy fears suggest
Thou still believ'st; and yet who knows but now,
Ev'n whilst we speak, the happy Narbas comes
To crown thy wishes, and restore thy son.

Eur. Perhaps his love, temper'd with fair discretion,
Which long conceal'd Ægisthus from the eyes
Of men, may hide his purpos'd journey from thee:
He dreads the murth'ers hand, and still protects him
From those who slew Cresphontes: we must strive
By artful methods to elude the rage
That cannot be oppos'd: I have secur'd
Their passage hither, and have plac'd some friends
Of most approved valour, whose sharp eyes
Will look abroad, and safe conduct them to thee.

Mer. I've plac'd my surest confidence in thee.

Eur. But what alas! can all my watchfulness
And faithful cares avail thee, when the people
Already meet to rob thee of thy right,
And place another on Messene's throne?
Injustice triumphs, and the shameless croud,
In proud contempt of sacred laws, incline
To Poliphontes.

Mer. Am I fall'n so low;
And shall my son return to be a slave?

To

To see a subject rais'd to the high rank
Of his great ancestors, the blood of Jove
Debas'd, degraded, forc'd to own a master.
Have I no friend, no kind protector left?
Ungrateful subjects! have you no regard,
No rev'rence for the mem'ry of Cresphontes?
Have you so soon forgot his glorious deeds,
His goodness to you?

Eur. Still his name is dear,
Still they regret him, still they weep his fate,
And pity thine: but pow'r intimidates,
And makes them dread the wrath of Poliphontes.

Mer. Thus, by my people still oppress'd, I see
Justice give way to faction, int'rest still,
The arbiter of fate, sells needy virtue
To pow'rful guilt; the weak must to the strong
For ever yield: but let us hence, and strive
To fire once more their coward hearts to rage
And fierce resentment, for the injur'd blood
Of Hercules: excite the people's love;
Flatter their hopes; O tell 'em, Euricles,
Their master is return'd.

Eur. I've said too much
Already; Poliphontes is alarm'd:
He dreads your son; he dreads your very tears:
Restless ambition, that holds nothing dear
Or sacred but itself, has fill'd his soul
With bitterness and pride: because he drove
The ruffian slaves from Pylos and Amphrysa,
And sav'd Messene from a band of robbers,
He claims it as his conquest: for himself
Alone he acts, and wou'd enslave us all:
He looks towards the crown, and to attain it
Wou'd throw down ev'ry fence, break every law,
Spill any blood that shall oppose him: they
Who kill'd thy husband were not more revengeful,
More bloody, than the cruel Poliphontes.

Mer. I am entangled in some fatal snare
On ev'ry side, danger and guilt surround me:

This

This Poliphontes, this ambitious subject,
Whose crimes——

Eur. He's here: you must dissemble.

S C E N E III.

MEROPE, POLIPHONTES, EROX.

Poli. Madam,

At length I come to lay my heart before you:
I've serv'd the state, and my successful toils
Have open'd me a passage to the throne:
Th' assembled chiefs a while suspend their choice,
But soon must fix it, or on Merope,
Or Poliphontes: the unhappy feuds
That laid Messene waste, and fill'd the land
With blood and slaughter, all are bury'd now
In peaceful harmony, and we alone
Remain to part the fair inheritance.
We shou'd support each other's mutual claim;
Our common int'rest, and our common foes,
Love for our country, reason, duty, all
Conspire to join us, all unite to say
The warrior, who reveng'd thy husband, he
Who sav'd thy kingdom, may aspire to thee.
I know these hoary locks, and wrinkled brow,
Have little charms to please a youthful fair one.
Thou'rt in the bloom of spring, and may'st despise
The winter of my days; but statesmen heed not
Such fond objections: let the royal wreath
Hide these grey hairs, a sceptre and a queen
Will recompense my toils: nor think me rash,
Or vain, you are the daughter of a king,
I know you are, but your Messene wants
A master now; therefore remember, madam,
If you wou'd keep your right, you must—divide it.
Mer. Heav'n, that afflicts me with its bitt'rest woes,
Prepar'd me not for this, this cruel insult:
How dar'st thou ask it? wert thou not the subject
Of great Cresphontes? think'st thou I will e'er

Betray

Betray the mem'ry of my dearest lord,
 To share with thee his son's inheritance,
 Trust to thy hands his kingdom and his mother?
 Think'st thou the royal wreath was made to bind
 A soldier's brows?

Poli. That soldier has a right
 To rule the kingdom which his arm defended.
 What was the first that bore the name of king,
 But a successful soldier? he who serves
 His country well requires not ancestry
 To make him noble: the inglorious blood,
 Which I receiv'd from him who gave me life,
 I shed already in my country's cause,
 It flow'd for thee; and, spite of thy proud scorn,
 I must at least be equal to the kings
 I have subdued: but, to be brief with you,
 The throne will soon be mine, and Merope
 May share it with me, if her pride will deign
 To accept it: I've a pow'ful party, madam.

Mer. A party! wretch, to trample on our laws:
 Is there a party which thou dar'st support
 Against the king's, against the royal race?
 Is this thy faith, thy solemn vows, thy oath,
 Sworn to Cresphontes, and to me; the love,
 The honour due to his illustrious shade,
 His wretched widow, and his hapless son;
 The gods he sprang from, and the throne they gave?

Poli. 'Tis doubtful whether yet your son survives;
 But grant that, from the mansions of the dead,
 He shou'd return, and in the face of heav'n
 Demand his throne, believe me when I say
 He wou'd demand in vain; Messene wants
 A master worthy of her, one well prov'd,
 A king who cou'd defend her: he alone
 Shou'd wield the sceptre who can best revenge
 His country's cause: Ægisthus is a child,
 Yet unexperienc'd in the ways of men,
 And therefore little will his birth avail him;
 Nought hath he done for us, and nought deserv'd:
 He cannot purchase at so cheap a rate
 Messene's throne, the right of pow'r supreme

Descends

Descends no more, the gift of nature, here
 From son to son ; it is the price of toil,
 Of labour, and of blood ; 'tis virtue's meed,
 Which I shall claim : have you so soon forgot,
 The savage sons of Pylos and Amphrysa,
 Those lawless plund'ers ? think on your Cresphontes,
 And your defenceless children, whom they slew :
 Who sav'd your country then ? who stopp'd their fury ?
 Who put your foes to flight, and chased them hence ?
 Did not this arm revenge that murder'd lord
 Whom yet you weep ? these, madam, are my rights,
 The rights of valour : this is all my rank,
 This all my title, and let heav'n decide it.
 If thy Ægisthus comes, by me perhaps
 He may be taught to live, by me to reign :
 Then shall he see how Poliphontes guides
 The reins of empire. I esteem the blood
 Of great Alcides, but I fear it not ;
 I look beyond Alcides' race, and fain
 Wou'd imitate the god from whom he sprung :
 I wou'd defend the mother, serve the son ;
 Be an example to him, and a father.

Mer. O, sir, no more of your affected cares ;
 Your gen'rous offers, meant but to insult
 My hapless son ; if you wou'd wish to tread
 In great Alcides' steps, reserve the crown
 For his descendent : know, that demi-god
 Was the avenger of wrong'd innocence ;
 No ravisher, no tyrant ; take thou care,
 And with his valour imitate his justice ;
 Protect the guiltless, and defend your king,
 Else shalt thou prove a worthless successor.
 If thou wou'd'st gain the mother, seek the son ;
 Go, bring him to me ; bring your master here,
 And then perhaps I may descend to you :
 But I will never be the vile accomplice,
 Or the reward of guilt like thine.

SCENE

S C E N E IV.

POLIPHONTES, EROX.

Er. My lord,
Did you expect to move her? Does the throne
Depend on her capricious will? Must she
Conduct you to it?

Poli. 'Twixt that throne and me,
Erox, I see a dreadful precipice
I must o'erleap, or perish: Merope
Expects Ægisthus; and the fickle croud,
If he returns, perhaps may bend towards him.
In vain his father's and his brother's blood,
Have open'd wide my passage to the throne;
In vain hath fortune cast her friendly veil
O'er all my crimes; in vain have I oppress'd
The blood of kings, whilst the deluded people
Ador'd me as their friend, if yet there lives
A hateful offspring of Alcides' race:
If this lamented son shou'd e'er again
Behold Messene, fifteen years of toil
At once are lost, and all my hopes o'erthrown;
All the fond prejudice of birth and blood
Will soon revive, the mem'ry of Cresphontes,
A hundred kings for his proud ancestors,
The boasted honour of a race divine,
A mother's tears, her sorrows, her despair,
All will conspire to shake my feeble pow'r.
Ægisthus is a foe I must subdue:
I wou'd have crush'd the serpent in his shell,
But that the diligent and subtle Narbas
Convey'd him hence, e'er since that time conceal'd
In some far distant land, he hath escap'd
My narrowest search, and baffled all my care:
I stopp'd his couriers, broke th' intelligence
'Twixt him and Merope; but fortune oft
Deserts us: from the silence of oblivion

Sometimes a secret may spring forth; and heav'n,
By slow and solemn steps, may bring down vengeance.

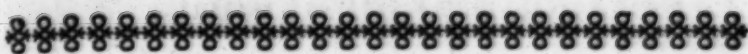
Er. Depend, undaunted, on thy prosp'rous fate;
Prudence, thy guardian god, shall still protect thee:
Thy orders are obey'd; the soldiers watch
Each avenue to Elis and Messene:
If Narbas brings Ægisthus here, they both
Must die.

Poli. But say, can'st thou depend on those
Whom thou hast plac'd to intercept them?

Er. Yes:
None of them know whose blood is to be shed,
Or the king's name whom they must sacrifice.
Narbas is painted to them as a traitor,
A guilty vagabond, that seeks some place
Of refuge; and the other, as a slave,
A murth'rer, to be yielded up to justice.

Poli. It must be so: this crime, and I have done;
And yet, when I have rid me of the son,
I must possess the mother: 'twill be useful:
I shall not then be branded with the name
Of an usurper; she will bring with her
A noble portion in the people's love:
I know their hearts are not inclin'd to me;
With fears dejected, or inflam'd with hope,
Still in extremes, the giddy multitude
Tumultuous rove, and int'rest only binds them,
That makes them mine. Erox, thy fate depends
On my success; thou art my best support:
Go, and unite them; bribe the sordid wretch
With gold to serve me, let the subtle courtier
Expect my favours; raise the coward soul,
Inspire the valiant, and caress the bold;
Persuade and promise, threaten and implore:
Thus far this sword hath brought me on my way;
But what by courage was begun, by art
We must complete; that many-headed monster,
The people, must be sooth'd by flattery's pow'r:
I'm fear'd already, but I wou'd be lov'd.

END of the FIRST ACT.



A C T II. S C E N E I.

MEROPE, EURICLES, ISMENIA.

Mer. **H**AST thou heard nothing of my dear Ægisthus?

No news from Elis' frontiers? O, too well I know the cause of this ill-boding silence!

Eur. In all our search we have discover'd nought, Save a young stranger, reeking with the blood Of one whom he had murder'd: we have chain'd, And brought him hither.

Mer. Ha! a murderer, A stranger too! whom, think'st thou, has he slain? My blood runs cold.

Eur. The mere effect of love And tenderness: each little circumstance Alarms a soul like thine, that ever dwells On one sad object; 'tis the voice of nature, And will be heard; but let not this disturb thee, A common accident: our borders long Have been infested with these ruffian slaves, The baneful fruit of our intestine broils; Justice hath lost her pow'r; our husbandmen Call on the gods for vengeance, and lament The blood of half their fellow-citizens, Slain by each other's hand: but, be compos'd, These terrors are not thine.

Mer. Who is this stranger? Answer me, tell me.

Eur. Some poor nameless wretch, Such he appears; brought up to infamy, To guilt, and sorrow.

Mer. Well, no matter who, Or what he is; let him be brought before me. Important truths are often brought to light

By meanest instruments. Perhaps my soul
Is too much mov'd; pity a woman's weakness,
Pity a mother who has all to fear,
And nothing to neglect: let him appear;
I'll see, and question him.

Eur. Your orders, madam,
Shall be obey'd.

Tell 'em to bring him here,
Before the queen.

[*To Imenia.*

Mer. I know my cares are vain;
But grief o'erpow'rs, and hurries me to acts
Perhaps imprudent; but you know I've cause
For my despair; they have dethron'd my son,
And wou'd insult the mother: Poliphontes
Hath ta'en advantage of my helpless state,
And dar'd to offer me his hand.

Eur. Thy woes
Are greater even than thou think'st they are.
I know this marriage wou'd debase thy honour,
And yet I see it must be so; thy fate
Hath bound thee to it by the cruel tie
Of dire necessity: I know it wears
A dreadful aspect, yet perchance may prove
The only means of placing on the throne
Its rightful master, so th' assembled chiefs
And soldiers think; they wish——

Mer. My son wou'd ne'er
Consent to that; no: poverty and exile,
With all their pains, were far less dreadful to him
Than these base nuptials.

Eur. If t' assert his rights
Alone, suffic'd to seat him on the throne,
Doubtless his pride wou'd spurn the shameful bond:
But if his soul is by misfortune taught
To know itself, if prudence guides his steps,
If his own int'rest, if his friends advice,
And above all, necessity, the first
Of human laws, have any influence o'er him,
He wou'd perceive, that his unhappy mother
Cou'd not bestow on him a dearer mark
Of her affection.

Mer.

Mer. Ha! what say'st thou?

Eur. Truth,

Unwelcome truth, which nothing but my zeal,
And your misfortunes, shou'd have wrested from me.

Mer. Wou'dst thou persuade me then, that int'rest e'er
Can get the better of my fix'd aversion
For Poliphontes, you who painted him
In blackest colours to me?

Eur. I describ'd him

Ev'n as he is, most dang'rous and bold;
I know his rashness, and I know his pow'r;
Nought can resist him, he's without an heir.
Remember that: you say, you love *Ægisthus*.

Mer. I do; and 'tis that love which makes the tyrant
Still more detested: wherefore talk'st thou thus
Of marriage and of empire? speak to me
Of my dear son; and tell me if he lives;
Inform me, *Euricles*.

Eur. Behold the stranger

Whom you desir'd to question, see, he comes.

S C E N E II.

MEROPE, EURICLES, *ÆGISTHUS* in chains,
ISMENIA, Guards.

ÆGISTHUS, at the bottom of the stage. [*To Ismenia*.

Is that the great unfortunate, the queen,
Whose glory and whose sorrows reach'd ev'n me
Amidst the desert wild where I was hid?

Ism. 'Tis she.

Ægis. Thou great creator of mankind!

Thou, who didst form those matchless charms, look
down

And guard thy image: virtue on a throne
Is sure the first and fairest work of heav'n.

Mer. Is that the murth'rer? Can such features hide
A cruel heart? Come near, unhappy youth,

Be not alarm'd, but answer me; whose blood
Is on thy hands?

Ægis. O, queen, forgive me; fear,
Respect, and grief, bind up my trembling lips.
I cannot speak; her presence shakes my soul
With terror and amazement. [Turning to Euricles.]

Mer. Tell me whom
Thy arm has slain.

Ægis. Some bold presumptuous youth,
Whom fate condemn'd to fall the wretched victim
Of his own rashness.

Mer. Ha! a youth! my blood
Runs cold within me: didst thou know him?

Ægis. No:
Messene's walls, her fields, and citizens,
Are new to me.

Mer. And did this unknown youth
Attack thee then? 'twas in thy own defence?

Ægis. Heav'n is my witness, I am innocent.
Just on the borders of Pamisus, where
A temple stands, sacred to Hercules,
Thy great progenitor, I offer'd up
To the avenger of wrong'd innocence
My humble prayers for thee; I had no victims,
No precious gifts to lay before him; all
I had to give him, was a spotless heart,
And simple vows, the poor man's hecatomb:
It seem'd as if the god receiv'd my homage
With kind affection, for I felt my heart
By more than common resolution fir'd:
Two men, both arm'd, and both unknown, surpris'd
me;

One in the bloom of youth, the other sunk
Into the vale of years: what brings thee here?
They cry'd, and wherefore for Alcides' race
Art thou a suppliant? At this word they rais'd
The dagger to my breast; but heav'n preserv'd me.
Pierc'd o'er with wounds, the youngest of them fell
Dead at my feet; the other basely fled
Like an assassin: knowing not what blood

I might

I might have shed, and doubtful of my fate,
 I threw the bloody corpse into the sea,
 And fled; your soldiers stopp'd me; at the name
 Of Merope, I yielded up my arms,
 And they have brought me hither.

Eur. Why these tears,
 My royal mistress?

Mer. Shall I own it to thee?
 I melted with compassion, as he told
 His melancholy tale; I know not why,
 But my heart sympathiz'd with his distress:
 It cannot be, I blush to think it, yet
 Methought I trac'd the features of Cresphontes:
 Cruel remembrance! wherefore am I mock'd
 With such deceitful images as these,
 Such fond delusions?

Eur. Do not then embrace
 Such vain suspicions, he's not that barbarian,
 That vile impostor, which we thought him.

Mer. No:
 Heav'n hath imprinted on his open front
 The marks of candour, and of honesty.
 Where wert thou born?

Ægis. In Elis.

Mer. Ha! in Elis!
 In Elis! say'st thou? Know'st thou aught of Narbas,
 Or of Ægisthus? Never hath that name
 Yet reach'd thine ear? What rank, condition, friends,
 Who was thy father?

Ægis. Polycletes, madam,
 A poor old man: to Narbas, or Ægisthus,
 Of whom thou speak'st, I am a stranger.

Mer. Gods!
 Why mock ye thus a poor unhappy mortal?
 A little dawn of hope just gleam'd upon me,
 And now my eyes are plung'd in deepest night:
 Say, what rank did thy parents hold in Greece?

Ægis. If virtue made nobility, old Sirris
 And Polycletes, from whose blood I sprang,
 Are not to be despis'd: their lot indeed
 Was humble, but their exemplary virtues

Made even poverty respectable :
 Cloath'd in his rustic garb, my honest father
 Obeys the laws, does all the good he can,
 And only fears the gods.

Mer. How strangely he affects me! ev'ry word
 Has some new charm : [*Aside.*
 But wherefore lest you then [*Turning to Ægisthus.*
 'The good old man? It must be dreadful to him
 To lose a son like thee.

Ægis. A fond desire
 Of glory led me hither: I had heard
 Of your Messene's troubles, and your own :
 Oft had I heard of the illustrious queen,
 Whose virtues merited a better fate ;
 The sad recital mov'd my soul; asham'd
 To spend at Elis my inglorious days,
 I long'd to brave the terrors of the field
 Beneath thy banners: this was my design,
 And this alone: an idle thirst of fame
 Missed my steps, and in their helpless age
 Persuaded me to leave my wretched parents :
 'Tis my first fault, and I have suffer'd for it :
 Heav'n hath aveng'd their cause, and I am fall'n
 Into a fatal snare.

Mer. 'Tis plain he is not,
 Cannot be guilty; falsehood never dwells
 With such ingenuous sweet simplicity :
 Heav'n has conducted here this hapless youth,
 And I will stretch the hand of mercy on him :
 It is enough for me he is a man,
 And most unfortunate; my son perhaps
 Ev'n now laments his more distressful fate :
 O he recalls Ægisthus to my thoughts:
 Their age the same; perhaps Ægisthus now
 Wanders like him from clime to clime, unknown,
 Unpity'd, suffers all the bitter woes
 And cruel scorn that waits on penury :
 Mis'ry like this will bend the firmest soul,
 And wither all its virtues: lot severe
 For a king's offspring, and the blood of gods!
 O if at least——

S C E N E

S C E N E III.

MEROPE, ÆGISTHUS, EURICLES, ISMENIA.

Ism. Hark! madam, heard you not
Their loud tumultuous cries? You know not what—

Mer. Whence are thy fears?

Ism. 'Tis Poliphontes' triumph:
The wav'ring people flatter his ambition,
And give their voices for him; he is chos'n
Messene's king: 'tis done.

Ægif. I thought the gods
Had on the throne of her great Ancestors
Plac'd Merope: O heav'n! the greater still
Our rank on earth, the more have we to fear:
A poor abandon'd exile, like myself,
Is less to be lamented than a queen:
But we have all our sorrows

[*Ægisthus is led off.*

Eur. I foretold it:

[*To Merope.*

You were to blame to scorn his proffer'd hand,
And brave his pow'r.

Mer. I see the precipice
That opens wide its horrid gulph before me;
But men and gods deceiv'd me; I expected
Justice from both, and both refus'd to grant it.

Eur. I will assemble yet our little force
Of trusty friends, to anchor our poor bark,
And save it from the fury of the storm;
To shield thee from the insults of a tyrant,
And the mad rage of an ungrateful people.

S C E N E IV.

MEROPE, ISMENIA.

Ism. 'Tis not the people's fault; they love you still,
And wou'd preserve the honour of your crown:

N 5.

They

They wish to see you join'd to Poliphontes,
That from your hand he then might seem to hold
The sov'reign pow'r.

Mer. They give me to a tyrant,
Betray Ægisthus, and enslave his mother.

Ism. They call you to the throne of your fore fathers:
Obey their voice; it is the voice of heav'n.

Mer. And woud'st thou have me purchase empty
honours
With infamy and shame?

S C E N E V

MEROPE, EURICLES, ISMENIA.

Eur. O queen, I tremble
To stand before thee: now prepare thy heart
For the most dreadful stroke; call forth thy courage
To bear the news.

Mer. I have no courage left,
'Tis worn out by misfortune: but no matter.
Proceed, inform me.

Eur. All is past; and fate——
I can no more.

Mer. Go on: my son——

Eur. He's dead:
It is too true: the dreadful news hath shock'd
Your friends, and froze their active zeal.

Mer. My son,
Ægisthus, dead!

Ism. O gods!

Eur. Some base assassins
Had in his passage laid the snares of death;
'The horrid crime is done.

Mer. O hateful day!
Why shines the sun on such a wretch as me?
He's lost; he's gone: what cruel hand destroy'd him?
Who shed his blood, the last of my sad race?

Eur.

Eur. It was that stranger, that abandon'd slave,
Whose persecuted virtue you admir'd,
For whom such pity rose in your kind breast;
Ev'n he whom you protected.

Mer. Can it be!
Was he that monster?

Eur. We have certain proofs,
And have discover'd two of his companions,
Who, lurking here, were still in search of Narbas,
Who had escap'd them: he who slew Ægisthus
Had taken from your son these precious spoils,

[The armour is shewn at a distance at the further end of the stage.]

The armour which old Narbas bore from hence.
The traitor, that he might not be discover'd,
Had thrown aside these bloody witnesses.

Mer. What hast thou told me? O these trembling
hands
Did on Cresphontes put that very armour
When first he went to battle. Ye dear reliques,
O to what hands were ye deliver'd! monster,
To seize this sacred armour.

Eur. 'Tis the same.
Ægisthus did bring hither.

Mer. Now behold it
Stain'd with his blood! but in Alcides' temple
Did they not see a poor old man?

Eur. 'Twas Narbas:
So Poliphontes owns.

Mer. O dreadful truth!
The villain, to conceal his crime, hath cast
His body to the waves, and bury'd him
In the rude ocean: O I see it all,
All my sad fate: O my unhappy son!

Eur. Wou'd you not have the traitor brought before
you,
And question'd here?

SCENE

S C E N E VI.

MEROPE, EURICLES, ISMENIA, EROX, guards.

Er. Permit me in the name
Of Poliphontes, my rejected master,
Perhaps rejected but because unknown,
To offer you, in this distressful hour,
His best assistance: he already knows
Ægisthus is no more, and bears a part
In your misfortunes

Mer. That I know he does,
A joyful part, and reaps the fruits of them,
The throne of my Cresphontes, and Ægisthus.

Er. That throne he wishes but to share with you,
And throw his sceptre at thy feet; the crown
He hopes will make him worthy of thy hand:
But to my hands the murth'rer must be giv'n,
For sacred is the pow'r of punishment,
'Tis a king's duty; he alone must wield
The sword of justice, the throne's best support,
That to his people and to you he owes;
Mid'th' hymen rites the murth'ers blood shall flow,
A grateful sacrifice.

Mer. My hand alone
Shall strike the fatal blow: though Poliphontes
Reigns o'er Messene, he must leave to me
The work of vengeance: let him keep my kingdom,
But yield to me the right of punishment:
On that condition, and on that alone,
I will be his: go, and prepare the rites;
'This hand, fresh bleeding from the traitor's bosom,
Shall at the altar join with Poliphontes.

Er. Doubtless, the king, whose sympathetic heart
Feels for your woes, will readily consent

SCENE

S C E N E VI.

MEROPE, EURICLES, ISMENIA.

Mer. O Euricles, this vile detested marriage,
 'Whate'er I promis'd, ne'er will come to pass :
 This arm shall pierce the savage murth'rer's breast,
 And instant turn the dagger to my own.

Erox. O ! madam, let me by the gods conjure you—

Mer. They have oppress'd me sorely ; I have been
 Too long the object of their wrath divine :
 They have depriv'd me of my dearest child,
 And at their altars shall I ask a husband ?
 Shall I conduct a stranger to the throne
 Of my forefathers ? wou'd'st thou have me join
 The Hymeneal to the fun'ral torch ?
 Shall Merope still raise her weeping eyes
 To heav'n, that shines no more on my *Ægisthus* ?
 Shall she wear out her melancholy days
 Beneath a hateful tyrant, and expect
 In tears and anguish an old age of sorrow ?
 When all is lost, and not ev'n hope remains,
 To live, is shameful, and to die, our duty.



A C T III. S C E N E I.

NARBAS.

O grief ! O horror ! O the weight of age !
 The youthful hero's warm imprudent ardor
 Was not to be restrain'd ; his courage burst
 Th' inglorious chains of vile obscurity,
 And he is lost to me, perhaps for ever.
 How shall I dare to see my royal mistress !
 Unhappy Narbas ! hither art thou come

Without

Without Ægisthus ; Poliphontes reigns,
 That subtle proud artificer of fraud,
 That savage murth'rer, who pursued us still
 From clime to clime, and laid the snares of death
 On ev'ry side, fix'd on the sacred throne,
 Which by his crimes so oft he hath profan'd,
 The proud usurper sits, and smiles secure :
 Hide me, ye gods, from his all-piercing eye,
 And save Ægisthus from the tyrant's sword :
 O guide me, heav'n, to his unhappy mother,
 And let me perish at her feet ! once more
 I see the palace, where the best of kings
 Was basely slain, and his defenceless child
 Sav'd in these arms ; and after fifteen years
 Shall I return to fill a mother's heart
 With anguish ? who will lead me to the queen ?
 No friend appears to guide me : but behold,
 Near yonder tomb I see a weeping croud,
 And hear their loud laments ! within these walls
 For ever dwells some persecuting god.

S C E N E II.

NARBAS, ISMENIA, *at the further end of the stage
 several of the queen's attendants, near the tomb of
 Cresphontes.*

Ism. What bold intruder presses thus unknown
 To the queen's presence, and disturbs the peace
 Of her retirement ? comes he from the tyrant
 A spy upon our griefs, to count the tears
 Of the afflicted ?

Nar. Whosoe'er thou art,
 Excuse the boldness of a poor old man ;
 Forgive th' intrusion ; I wou'd see the queen,
 Perhaps may serve her.

Ism. What a time is this
 Which thou hast chos'n to interrupt her griefs !

Respect

Respect a mother's bitter sorrows ; hence,
Unhappy stranger, nor offend her fight.

Nar. O, in the name of the avenging gods,
Have pity on my age, my misfortunes :
I am no stranger here : O, if you serve
And love the queen, forgive the tears that long
Have flow'd for her, and trust a heart that feels
For Merope as deeply as thy own.
What tomb is that where you so late did join
Your griefs ?

Ism. The tomb of an illustrious hero,
A wretched father, and a hapless king,
The tomb of great Cresphontes.

Nar. My lov'd master ! *[Going towards the tomb.]*
Ye honour'd ashes !

Ism. But Cresphontes' wife
Is more to be lamented still.

Nar. What worse
Cou'd happen to her ?

Ism. A most dreadful stroke ;
Her son is slain.

Nar. Her son ! Ægisthus ! gods !
And is Ægisthus dead ?

Ism. All know it here
Too well.

Nar. Her son !

Ism. A barbarous assassin
Did slay him at Messene's gates.

Nar. O death,
I did foretel thee : horror and despair !
Is the queen sure, and art thou not deceiv'd ?

Ism. O 'tis too plain ; we have undoubted proofs ;
It must be so : he is no more.

Nar. Is this
The fruit of all my care ?

Ism. The wretched queen,
Abandon'd to despair, will scarce survive him :
She liv'd but for her child, and now the ties
Are loos'd that bound her to this hated life :
But, e'er she dies, with her own hand she waits
To pierce the murth'rer's heart, and be reveng'd ;

Ev'n

Ev'n at Cresphontes' tomb his blood shall flow.
 Soon will the victim, by the king's permission,
 Be hither brought, to perish at her feet :
 But Merope is lost in grief, and therefore
 Wou'd wish to be alone : you must retire.

Nar. If it be so, why shou'd I seek the queen ?
 I will but visit yonder tomb, and die.

S C E N E III.

I S M E N I A. [Alone.]

This old man seems most worthy : how he wept !
 Whilst the unfeeling slaves around us seem,
 Like their proud master, but to mock our sorrows :
 What int'rest cou'd he have ? yet tranquil pity
 Doth seldom shed so many tears ; methought
 He mourn'd the lost Ægisthus like a father :
 He must be sought—but here's a dreadful fight.

S C E N E IV.

MEROPE, ISMENIA, EURICLES, ÆGISTHUS
in chains, guards, sacrificers.

Mer. [Near the tomb.] Bring forth that horrid victim
 to my fight ;

I must invent some new unheard of torment,
 That may be equal to his crime ; alas !
 Not to my grief, that were impossible.

Ægis. Dear have I bought thy momentary kindness,
 Guardians of innocence, protect me now !

Eur. Before the traitor suffers, let him name
 His vile accomplices.

Mer. He must ; he shall : [Coming forward]
 Say, monster, what induc'd thee to a crime
 So horrible to nature ! how had I
 E'er injur'd thee ?

Ægis.

Ægif. Now bear me witness, gods,
 You who revenge the perjuries of men
 If e'er my lips knew fraud or base imposture ;
 I told thee nought but simple truth ; thy heart,
 Fierce as it was, relented at my tale,
 And you stretch'd forth a kind protecting hand ;
 So soon is justice weary of her task ?
 Unweeting I have shed some precious blood :
 Whose was it, tell me, what new int'rest sways thee ?

Mer. What interest ? barbarian !

Ægif. O'er her cheek
 A deadly paleness spreads : it wounds my soul
 To see her thus. O I wou'd spill my blood
 A thousand times to save her.

Mer. Subtle villain !
 How artfully dissembled is that grief !
 He kills me, and yet seems to weep my fate.

[She falls back into the arms of Ismenia.]

Eur. Madam, revenge yourself, revenge the laws,
 The cause of nature, and the blood of kings.

Ægif. Is this the royal justice of a court ?
 Ye praise and flatter first, and then condemn me.
 Why did I leave my peaceful solitude !
 O good old man, what will thy sorrows be,
 And thou, unhappy mother, whose dear voice
 So oft foretold——

Mer. Barbarian, and hast thou
 A mother ? I had been a mother yet
 But for thy rage, thou hast destroy'd my son.

Ægif. If I am thus unhappy, if he was
 Indeed thy son, I ought to suffer for it ;
 But though my hand was guilty, yet my heart
 Was innocent : heav'n knows I wou'd have giv'n
 This day my life to save or his or thine.

Mer. Did'st thou take this armour from him ?

Ægif. No :
 It is my own.

Mer. What say'st thou ?

Ægif. Yes ; I swear
 By thee, by him, by all thy ancestors,
 My father gave to me that precious gift.

Mer.

Mer. Thy father! where? in Elis? how he moves
What was his name? speak, answer. [me!

Ægis. Polycetes:
I've told thee so already.

Mer. O thou riv'ft
My heart: what foolish pity stopp'd my vengeance?
It is too much: assist me, friends, bring here
The monster, the perfidious—— [*Lifting up the dagger.*
O ye manes

Of my dear son, this bloody arm——
Nar. O gods! [*Entering on a sudden.*
What woud'st thou do?

Mer. Who calls?

Nar. Stop: stop—alas!
If I but name his mother, he's undone.

Mer. Die, traitor.

Nar. Stop.

Ægis. My father! [*Turning towards Narbas.*

Mer. Ha! his father!

Ægis. What do I see? and whither wert thou going?
[*To Narbas.*

Cam'st thou to be a witness of my death?

Nar. O, madam, go no further: Euricles,
Remove the victim, let me speak to thee.

Euri. O heav'n! [*Takes away Ægisthus, and shuts
[up the lower part of the scene.*

Mer. Thou mak'st me tremble; I was going
T'avenge my son. [*Coming forward.*

Nar. To sacrifice—Ægisthus. [*Kneeling down.*

Mer. Ægisthus! ha!

Nar. 'Twas he, whom thy rash arm
Had well nigh slain; believe me, 'twas Ægisthus.

Mer. And lives he then?

Nar. 'Tis he, it is your son.

Mer. I die! [*Fainting away in the arms of Ismenia.*

Ism. Good heav'n!

Nar. Recal her fleeting spirits; [*To Ismenia.*
This sudden transport of tumultuous joy,
Mix'd with anxiety and tender fears,
May quite o'erpow'r her.

Mer.

Mer. Narbas, is it you? [*Coming to herself.*
Or do I dream? is it my son? where is he?
Let him come hither.

Nar. No: refrain your love,
Restrain your tenderness.
O keep the secret; [*To Ismenia.*
The safety of the queen, and of Ægisthus,
Depend on that.

Mer. Alas! and must fresh danger
Embitter my new joys? O dear Ægisthus,
What cruel god still keeps thee from thy mother?
Was he restor'd but to afflict me more?

Nar. You knew him not, and wou'd have slain your
If his arrival here be once discover'd, [*son:*
And you acknowledge him, he's lost for ever.
Dissemble therefore, for thou know'st that guilt
Reigns in Messene: thou art watch'd; be cautious.

S C E N E V.

MEROPE, EURICLES, NARBAS, ISMENIA.

Eur. 'Tis the king's order, madam, that we seize—

Mer. Whom?

Eur. The young stranger, whom thou had'st con-
To death. [*demn'd*

Mer. That stranger is my child, my son:

[*With transport.*

They wou'd destroy him, Narbas, let us fly——

Nar. No: stay.

Mer. It is my son; they'll have him from me,
My dear Ægisthus: why is this?

Eur. The king
Wou'd question him before he dies.

Mer. Indeed!

And knows he then I am his mother?

Eur. No:

'Tis yet a secret to them all.

Mer

Mer. We'll fly

To Poliphontes, and implore his aid.

Nar. Fear Poliphontes, and implore the gods.

Eur. Howe'er Ægisthus may alarm the tyrant,
Thy promis'd nuptials make his pardon sure :
Bound to each other in eternal bonds,
Thy son will soon be his ; though jealousy
May now subsist, it must be lost in love
When he's your husband.

Nar. He your husband, gods !
I'm thunder struck.

Mer. I will no longer bear
Such anguish, let me hence.

Nar. Thou shalt not go :
Unhappy mother ! thou shalt ne'er submit
To these detested nuptials.

Eur. She is forc'd
To wed him, that she may revenge Cresphontes.

Nar. He was his murth'rer.

Mer. He ! that traitor !

Nar. Yes :
By Poliphontes thy Ægisthus sell,
His father, and his brothers : I beheld
The tyrant welt'ring in Cresphontes' blood.

Mer. O gods !

Nar. I saw him glorying in his crimes ;
Saw him admit the foe, and through the palace
Spread fire and slaughter ; yet appear'd to those
Who knew him not th' avenger of that king
Whom he had slain : I pierc'd the savage croud,
And in my feeble arms uprais'd your son,
And bore him thence ; the pitying gods protected
His helpless innocence : these sixteen years,
From place to place I led him, chang'd my name
To Polycetes, hid him from the foe,
And now at last it seems have brought him hither,
To see a tyrant on Messene's throne,
And Merope the wife of Poliphontes.

Mer. Thy tale has harrow'd up my soul.

Eur. He comes :
'Tis Poliphontes.

Mer.

Mer. Is it possible?

Away, good Narbas, hide thee from his rage.

Nar. Now, if Ægisthus e'er was dear to thee,
Dissemble with the tyrant.

Eur. We must hide
This secret in the bottom of our hearts,
A word may ruin all.

Mer. Go thou and guard [To Euricles.
That precious treasure well.

Eur. O doubt it not.

Mer. My hopes depend on thee : he is my son
Remember, and thy king.—The monster comes.

S C E N E VI.

MEROPE, POLIPHONTES, EROX, ISMENIA,
Attendants.

Poli. The altar is prepar'd, the throne awaits you,
Our int'rests soon will with our hearts be join'd :
As king, and husband, 'tis my duty now
Both to defend and to revenge you, madam :
Two of the traitors I have seiz'd already,
Who shall repay the murder with their blood :
But, spite of all my care, thy tardy vengeance
Hath seconded but ill my purposes :
You told me you wou'd wish yourself to slay
The murth'rer, and I gave him to your justice.

Mer. O that I might be my own great avenger !

Poli. 'Tis a king's duty, and shall be my care.

Mer. Thine, said'st thou ?

Poli. Wherefore is the sacrifice
Delay'd ? dost thou no longer love thy son ?

Mer. May all his foes meet with their due reward !
But if this murth'rer has accomplices,
By him perhaps I may hereafter learn
Who kill'd my dear Cresphontes : they who slew
The father wou'd for ever persecute
The mother and the son : O if I e'er——

Poli.

Poli. I too cou'd wish to be inform'd of that,
And therefore I have ta'en him to my care.

Mer. To thine ?

Poli. Yes, madam, and I hope to draw
The secret from him.

Mer. But you must not keep
This murth'rer : I must have him ; nay, you promis'd,
You know you did——

O cruel fate ! my son !

[*Aside.*

What art thou doom'd to ?

Pity me, my lord !

[*To Poliphontes.*

Poli. Whence is this sudden transport ? he shall die.

Mer. Who ? he ?

Poli. His death shall satisfy thy soul.

Mer. Ay : but I want to see, to speak to him.

Poli. These starts of passion, and these sudden tran-
Of rage and tenderness, that face of horror, [sports
Might give me cause perhaps of just suspicion ;
And, to be plain with you, some strange disgust,
Some groundless fears, some new alarm, hath rais'd
This tempest in your soul ; what have you heard
From that old man who went so lately hence ?
Why doth he shun me ? what am I to think ?
Who is he ?

Mer. O my lord ! so lately crown'd,
Do fears and jealousies already wait
Around your throne ?

Poli. Why wilt not thou partake it ?
Then shou'd I bid adieu to all my fears :
The altar waits, prepar'd for Merope
And Poliphontes.

Mer. Thou hast gain'd the throne,
The gods have giv'n it thee, and now thou want'st
Cresphontes' wife to make his kingdom sure.
This crime alone——

Ism. O stop——

Mer. My lord, forgive me ;
I am a wretched mother ; I have lost
My all ; the gods, the cruel gods have robb'd me
Of ev'ry bliss : O give me, give me back
The murth'rer of my son !

Poli. This hand shall shed
The traitor's blood : come, madam, follow me.

Mer. O gracious heav'n ! in pity to my woes,
Preserve a mother, and conceal her weakness !



A C T IV. S C E N E I.

POLIPHONTES, EROX.

Poli. I ALMOST thought she had discover'd some-
thing

Touching her husband's murther, for she frown'd
Indignant on me ; but I want her hand,
And not her heart ; the croud will have it so ;
We must not disoblige them ; by this marriage
I shall secure them both : I look on her
But as a slave that's useful to my purpose,
Chain'd to my chariot wheels to grace my triumph,
And little heed her hatred or her love.
But thou hast talk'd to this young murth'rer,
What think'st thou of him ?

Er. He's immoveable,
Simple in speech, but of undaunted courage,
He braves his fate : I little thought to find
In one of his low birth a soul so great ;
I own, my lord, I cannot but admire him.

Poli. Who is he ?

Er. That I know not ; but most certain
He is not one of those whom we employ'd
To watch for Narbas.

Poli. Art thou sure of that ?
The leader of that band I have myself
Dispatch'd, and prudent bury'd in his blood
The dang'rous secret ; but this young unknown
Alarms me : is it certain he destroy'd
Ægisthus ? has propitious fate, that still
Prevented all my wishes, been thus kind ?

Er.

Er. Merope's tears, her sorrow, and despair,
Are the best proofs ; but all I see confirms
Thy happiness, and fortune hath done more
Than all our cares.

Poli. Fortune doth often reach
What wisdom cannot : but I know too well
My danger, and the number of my foes,
To leave that fortune to decide my fate :
Whoe'er this stranger be, he must not live,
His death shall purchase me this haughty queen,
And make the crown sit firmer on my head.
The people then, subjected to my pow'r,
Will think at least their prince is dead, and know
That I reveng'd him : but, inform me, who
Is this old man that shuns me thus ? there seems
Some myst'ry in his conduct ; Merope,
Thou tell'st me, wou'd have slain the murth'rer,
But that this old man did prevent her ; what
Cou'd move him to it ?

Er. He's the young man's father,
And came t'implore his pardon.

Poli. Ha ! his pardon !
I'll see, and talk with him ; but he avoids me,
And therefore I suspect him ; but I'll know
This secret : what cou'd be the queen's strange purpose,
In thus deferring what so ardently
She seem'd to wish for ? all her rage was chang'd
To tend'rest pity ; through her griefs methought
A ray of joy broke forth.

Er. What is her joy,
Her pity, or her vengeance, now to thee ?

Poli. It doth concern me nearly ; I have cause
For many fears ; but she approaches :—bring
That stranger to me.

SCENE

S C E N E II.

POLIPHONTES, EROX, ÆGISTHUS, EURICLES,
MEROPE, ISMENIA, Guards.

Mer. Fulfil your word, sir, and revenge me ; give
The victim to my hands, and mine alone.

Poli. You see I mean to keep it: he's before you:
Revenge yourself, and shed the traitor's blood ;
'Then, madam, with your leave, we'll to the altar.

Mer. O gods !

Ægis. Am I then to be made the purchase
[To Poliphontes.

Of the queen's favour ? my poor life indeed
Is but of little moment, and I die
Contented ; but I am a stranger here,
A helpless, innocent, unhappy stranger ;
If heav'n has made thee king, thou shou'd'st protect me :
I've slain a man, 'twas in my own defence ;
The queen demands my life ; she is a mother,
Therefore I pity her, and bless the hand
Rais'd to destroy me : I accuse none here
But thee, thou tyrant.

Poli. Hence, abandon'd villain ;
Dar'st thou insult—

Mer. O pardon his rash youth,
Brought up in solitude, and far remov'd
From courts, he knows not the respect that's due
To majesty.

Poli. Amazing ! justify'd
By you !

Mer. By me, my lord ?

Poli. Yes, madam, you.
Is this the murth'rer of your son ?

Mer. My child,
My son, the last of a long line of kings,
Beneath a vile assassin's hand——

Ism. O heav'n !
What woud'st thou do ?

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O

Poli.

Poli. Thy eyes are fix'd upon him
With tenderness and joy; thy tears too flow,
Though thou woud'st hide them from me.

Mer. No: 'tis false:

I wou'd not, cannot hide them: well thou know'st
I've too much cause to weep.

Poli. Dry up you tears;

He dies this moment: soldiers, do your office.

Mer. O spare him, spare him. [*Coming forward.*]

Ægif. Ha! she pities me.

Poli. Dispatch him.

Mer. O he is——

Poli. Strike.

Mer. Stay, barbarian,

He is—my son.

Ægif. Am I thy son?

Mer. Thou art: [*Embracing him.*]

And heav'n, that snatch'd thee from this wretched bo-
Which now too late hath ope'd my longing eyes, [*son,*]
Restores thee to a weeping mother's arms
But to destroy us both.

Ægif. What miracle
Is this, ye gods?

Poli. A vile imposture: thou
His mother? thou, who dist'st demand his death?

Ægif. O if I die the son of Merope
I die contented, and absolve my fate.

Mer. I am thy mother, and my love of thee
Betray'd us both; we are undone, *Ægithus*;
Yes, *Poliphontes*, the important secret
At length is thine; before thee stands my son,
Cresphontes' heir; thy master, and thy king;
The offspring of the gods, thy captive now;
I have deceiv'd thee, and I glory in it;
'Twas for my child: but nature has no pow'r
O'er tyrant's hearts, that still rejoice in blood:
I tell thee, 'tis my son, 'tis my *Ægithus*.

Poli. Ha! can it be?

Ægif. It is; it must be so;

Her tears confirm it: yes, I am the son
Of Merope, my heart assures me of it:

And

And, had'st thou not disarm'd me, with this hand
I wou'd chastise thee, traitor.

Poli. 'Tis too much ;

I'll bear no more : away with him.

Mer. Behold

[*Falling on her knees.*]

Thus low on earth the wretched Merope
Falls at your feet, and bathes them with her tears :
Doth not this humble posture speak my griefs,
And say I am a mother ? O I tremble
When I look back on the dire precipice
I have escap'd, the murder of my son ;
Still I lament th' involuntary crime.
Did'st thou not say thou wou'd'st protect his youth,
And be a father to him ? and yet now
Thou wou'd'st destroy him : O have pity on him
Some guilty hand bereav'd him of a father ;
O save the son, defend the royal race,
The seed of gods : defenceless and alone
He stands before thee : trample not on him,
Who is unable to resist thy pow'r ;
Let him but live, and I am satisfy'd ;
Save but my child, and all shall be forgotten :
O he wou'd make me happy ev'n in woe ;
My husband and my children all wou'd live
Once more in my *Ægisthus* : O behold
His royal ancestors with me implore thee
To spare the noble youth, and save thy king.

Ægis. Rise, madam, rise, or I shall ne'er believe
Cresphontes was my father ; 'tis beneath
His queen, beneath the mother of *Ægisthus*,
To supplicate a tyrant ; my fierce heart
Will never stoop so low : undaunted long
I braved the meanness of my former fortune,
Nor am I dazzled by the splendid lustre
Of these new honours ; but I feel myself
Of royal blood, and know I am thy son.
Great *Heracles*, like me, began his days
In misery and sorrow ; but the gods
Conducted him to immortality,
Because, like me, he rose superior to them :
To me his blood descends ; O let me add

His courage, and his virtues ; let me die
 Worthy of thee ; be that my heritage !
 Cease then thy pray'rs, nor thus disgrace the blood
 Of those immortal pow'rs from whom I sprang.

Poli. Trust me, I bear a part in your misfortunes,
 [To Merope.]

Feel for your griefs, and pity your distress ;
 I love his courage, and esteem his virtue
 He seems well worthy of the royal birth
 Which he assumes ; but truths of such importance
 Demand more ample proofs ; I take him therefore
 Beneath my care, and, if he is thy son,
 I shall adopt him mine.

Ægif. Thou, thou adopt me ?

Mer. Alas ! my child !

Poli. His fate depends on thee :
 It is not long since, to secure his death,
 Thou did'st consent to marry Poliphontes ;
 Now thou wou'd'st save him, shall not love do more
 Than vengeance ?

Mer. Ha ! barbarian !

Poli. Madam, know
 His life, or death, depends on thy resolve :
 I know your love, your tenderness, too well,
 To think you will expose to my just wrath
 So dear an object by a harsh refusal.

Mer. My lord, at least let him be free, and deign—

Poli. He is your son, or he's a traitor, madam ;
 I must be your's before I can protect him,
 Or be reveng'd on both ; a word from you
 Decides his fate, or punishment, or pardon ;
 Or as his mother I shall look upon you
 Or his accomplice ; therefore make your choice :
 I will receive your answer at the temple
 Before th' attesting gods. Guard well your pris'ner :

[To the soldiers.]

Come, follow me : I shall expect you, madam ;

[Turning to Merope.]

Be quick in your resolve ; confirm his birth
 By giving me your hand ; your answer only

Saves

Saves or condemns him ; and as you determine
He is my victim, madam, or—my son.

Mer. O grant me but the pleasure to behold him ;
Restore him to my love, to my despair.

Poli. You'll see him at the temple.

Ægif. O great queen, [*As the guards are carrying him off.*]
I dare not call thee by the sacred name
Of mother, do not, I beseech thee, aught
Unworthy of thyself, or of *Ægisthus* :
For, if I am thy son, thy son shall die
As a king ought.

S C E N E III.

M E R O P E *alone.*

Ye cruel spoilers, why
Will you thus tear him from me ? O he's gone,
I've lost him now for ever ; wherefore, heaven,
Didst thou restore him to a mother's vows,
Or why preserve him in a foreign land,
To fall at last a wretched sacrifice,
A victim to the murth'rer of his father ?
O save him, hide him in the desert's gloom ;
Direct his steps, and shield him from the tyrant !

S C E N E IV.

M E R O P E, N A R B A S, E U R I C L E S.

Mer. O Narbas, know'st thou the unhappy fate
Which I am doom'd to ?

Nar. Well I know the king
Must die ; I know *Ægisthus* is in chains.

Mer. And I destroy'd him.

Nar. You ?

Mer. Discover'd all :
But think'st thou, Narbas, ever mother yet

Cou'd see a child, as I did, and be silent?
 But it is past: and now I must repair
 My weakness with my crimes.

Nar. What crimes?

S C E N E V.

MEROPE NARBAS, EURICLES, ISMENIA.

Ism. O madam,
 Now call forth all the vigour of your soul,
 The hour of trial comes: the fickle croud,
 Still fond of novelty, with ardent zeal,
 Press forward to behold th' expected nuptials;
 Each circumstance conspires to serve the tyrant:
 Already the bribed priest has made his god
 Declare for Poliphontes: he receiv'd
 Your vows, Messene was a witness to them,
 And heav'n will see the contract is fulfill'd:
 Thus spoke the holy seer; the people answer'd
 With acclamations loud, and songs of joy;
 They little know the grief that wrings thy heart:
 But thank the gods for these detested nuptials,
 And bless the tyrant for his cruelty.

Mer. And are my sorrows made the public joy?

Nar. O these are dreadful means to save thy son.

Mer. They are indeed: thou shudder'st at the thought:
 It is a crime.

Nar. But to destroy thy child
 Were still more horrible.

Mar. Away: despair
 Has giv'n me courage, and restor'd my virtue:
 Let's to the temple; there I'll shew the people
 My dear Ægisthus; 'twixt myself and th' altar
 Will place my son; the gods will see him there;
 They will defend him, for from them he sprang:
 Too long already persecuting heav'n
 Hath scourg'd his helpless innocence; and now
 It will avenge him: O I will set forth
 His savage murth'rer in the blackest colours,

Till

Till vengeance shall inspire each honest heart
 With tenfold rage : now dread a mother's cries,
 Ye cruel tyrants, for they will be heard :
 They come ; alas ! I tremble yet, despair
 And horror seize me : hark, they call, my son
 Is dying : see the cruel murth'rer plants
 A dagger in his breast : a moment more
 And he is lost : ye savage ministers [*Turning to the sacrific-*
 Of the base tyrant, you must drag the victim [*curs.*
 Up to the altar ; can you, must you do it ?
 O vengeance, duty, tenderness, and love,
 And thou great nature, what will ye ordain,
 What will ye do with an unhappy queen,
 Abandon'd to despair ?



A C T V. S C E N E I.

ÆGISTHUS, NARBAS, EURICLES.

Nar. **O**UR fate is yet uncertain, whilst the tyrant
 Still keeps us in the palace ; all my fears
 Are for Ægisthus : O my king, my son,
 Let me still call thee by that tender name,
 O live, disarm the tyrant's rage, preserve
 A life so dear, so precious to Messene,
 So valued by thy faithful Narbas !

Eur. Think

On the poor queen, who, for thy sake alone
 An humble suppliant, sprinkles with her tears
 The tyrant's murh'rous hand.

Ægis. I'm scarce awaken'd

From my long dream, I seem as one new-born ;
 A wand'ring stranger in a world unknown ;
 New thoughts inspire, new day breaks in upon me ;
 The son of Merope, and great Cresphontes ;
 And yet his murth'rer triumphs ; he commands,

Q. 4

And

And I obey ; the blood of Hercules
A captive and in chains !

Nar. O wou'd to heav'n
The grandson of Alcides still remain'd
Unknown in Elis !

Ægis. Is it not most strange,
Young as I am, that I shou'd know already,
By sad experience, ev'ry human woe ?
Horror and shame, and banishment, and death,
Since my first dawn of life, have press'd upon me :
A persecuted wretch I wander'd long
From clime to clime, hid in the desert's gloom,
I languish'd there in vile obscurity :
Yet, bear me witness heav'n, mid'st all my woes,
Nor murmur'd nor complain'd : tho' proud ambition
Devour'd my soul, I learn'd the humble virtues
That suited best my hard and low condition :
Still I respected, still obey'd thee, Narbas,
And lov'd thee as a father ; nor wou'd e'er
Have wish'd to find another, but high heav'n
Wou'd change my fate to make me but more wretched :
I am Cresphontes' son, yet can't revenge him ;
I've found a mother, and a-tyrant now
Will snatch her from me ; soon she must be his :
O I cou'd curse the hour that gave me birth,
And the kind succour which thy goodness lent me :
O why didst thou hold back th' uplifted hand
Of a mistaken mother ? But for thee
I had fulfill'd my fate, and all my woes
Had ended with my life.

Nar. We are undone,
The tyrant comes.

S C E N E II.

POLIPHONTES, ÆGISTHUS, NARBAS, EURI-
CLES, Guards.

Poli. Retire : and thou, rash youth, [*To Narbas and*
Whose tender years demand my pity, list, [*the rest.*
And

And mark me well ; for the last time I come
 To give thee here thy choice of life or death,
 Thy present and thy future happiness,
 Thy very being hangs upon my will :
 I can advance thee to the highest rank,
 Or shut thee in a dungeon, kill or save thee :
 Remov'd from courts, and bred in solitude,
 Thou art not fit to govern ; let me guide
 In wisdom's ways thy unexperienc'd youth ;
 Assume not in thy humble state a pride
 Which thou mistak'st for virtue : if thy birth
 Be mean and lowly, bend to thy condition ;
 If happier fate hath giv'n thee to descend
 From royal blood, and thou wert born a prince,
 Make thyself worthy of thy noble rank,
 And learn of me to rule : the queen, thou see'st
 Has set thee an example ; she obeys,
 And meets me at the temple ; follow her,
 Tread in my steps, attend us to the altar,
 And swear eternal homage to thy king,
 To Poliphontes : if thou fear'st the gods,
 Call them to witness thy obedience ; haste,
 The gates of glory open to receive,
 And not to enter may be fatal to thee :
 Determine therefore now, and answer me.

Ægif. How can I answer when thou hast disarm'd
 Thy words, I own, astonish and confound ; [me ?
 But give me back that weapon which thy fears
 Have wrested from me ; give me my good sword,
 And I will answer as I ought ; will shew thee,
 Perfidious as thou art, which is the slave,
 And which the master, whether Poliphontes
 Was born to rule o'er princes, or Ægisthus
 To scourge oppressors.

Poli. Impotence and rashness !
 My kind indulgence makes thee insolent :
 Thou think'st I'll not demean myself so far
 To punish an unknown rebellious slave ;
 But mercy, thus abused, will change to wrath :
 I give thee but a moment to determine,
 And shall expect thee at the altar ; there

To die or to obey : guards, bring him to me :
 Narbas, to you and Euricles I leave
 The haughty rebel ; you shall answer for him :
 I know your hatred of me, and I know
 Your weakness too, but trust to your experience,
 You will advise him for the best ; mean time
 Remember, whether he's the son of Narbas
 Or Merope, he must obey, or die.

S C E N E III.

ÆGISTHUS, NARBAS, EURICLES.

Ægis. I'll listen to no counsel but the voice
 Of vengeance ; O inspire me, Hercules,
 O from thy seats of endless bliss look down
 On thy Ægisthus, animate his soul,
 And guide his footsteps ! Poliphontes calls,
 I will attend him ; let us to the altar.

Nar. Wilt thou then die ?

Eur. We must not follow thee :
 Let us collect our few remaining friends,
 And strive——

Ægis. Away : another time my soul
 Wou'd listen to your kind advice, for well
 I know ye love me ; but no counsellors
 Must now be heard save all-directing heav'n
 And my own heart : th' irresolute alone
 Is sway'd by others, but the blood of heroes
 Will guide itself : away, the die is cast.
 What do I see ? O gracious heav'n ! my mother !

S C E N E IV.

MEROPE, ÆGISTHUS, NARBAS, EURICLES, Attendants.

Mer. Once more, Ægisthus, by the tyrant's order,
 We meet together ; he has sent me to thee :

Think

Think not that, after these detested nuptials,
 I mean to live ; but for thy sake, my son,
 I have submitted to this shameful bondage :
 For thee alone I fear ; for thee I bear
 This load of infamy : Olive, Ægisthus,
 Let me intreat thee, live ; e'er thou can'st rule
 Thou must obey, and servitude must open
 The path to vengeance ; thou contemn'st my weakness,
 I know thou dost ; but O the more I love
 The more I fear. O my dear child—

Ægif. Be bold,
 And follow me.

Mer. Alas ! what wou'd'st thou do ?
 Why, ye just gods, why was he made too virtuous ?

Ægif. See'st thou my father's tomb ? dost thou not
 His voice ? art thou a mother and a queen ? [hear :
 O if thou art, come on.

Mer. Methinks some god
 Inspires thy soul, and raises thee above
 The race of mortals : now I see the blood
 Of great Alcides flows thro' ev'ry vein,
 And animates Ægisthus : O my son,
 Give me a portion of thy noble fire,
 And raise this drooping heart !

Ægif. Hast thou no friends
 Within this fatal temple ?

Mer. Once I had
 A croud of followers when I was a queen ;
 But now their virtue sinks beneath the weight
 Of my misfortunes, and they bend their necks
 To this new yoke : they hate the tyrant, yet
 Have crown'd him ; love their queen, and yet desert her.

Ægif. By all art thou abandon'd ; at the altar
 Waits Poliphontes for thee ?

Mer. Yes.

Ægif. His soldiers,
 Do they attend him ?

Mer. No : he is surrounded
 By that ungrateful faithless croud that once
 Encircled Merope, by them upled

To th' altar I will force for thee alone
A passage.

Ægis. And alone I'll follow thee :
There shall I meet my ancestors divine :
The gods who punish murth'ers will be there.

Mer. Alas ! these fifteen years they have contemn'd
thee.

Ægis. They did it but to try me.

Mer. What's thy purpose ?

Ægis. No matter what ; let us begone : farewell
My mournful friends, at least ye soon shall know
The son of Merope deserv'd your care.
Narbás, believe me, thou shalt never blush.

[To Narbás, embracing him.]

To own me for thy son.

SCENE V.

NARBÁS, EURICLES,

Nar. What means *Ægisthus* ?

Alas ! my cares are fruitless all and vain :
I hoped the sure slow-moving hand of time
Wou'd justify'd the ways of heav'n, and place
The wrong'd *Ægisthus* on *Messene's* throne ;
But guilt still triumphs, and my hopes are vanish'd ;
His courage will destroy him ; death waits
His disobedience.

[A noise within.]

Eur. Hark ! they shout.

Nar. Alas !

It is the fatal signal.

Eur. Let us listen.

Nar. I tremble.

Eur. Doubtless, at the very moment
When *Poliphontes* was to wed the queen,
She has dissolv'd the shameful bonds by death,
For so her rage had purpos'd.

Nar. Then *Ægisthus*
Must perish too, she shou'd have liv'd for him.

Eur.

Eur. The noise increases, like the rolling thunder
Onward it comes, and ev'ry moment grows
More dreadful.

Nar. Hark! I hear on ev'ry side
The trumpets sound, the groans of dying men,
And clash of swords; they force the palace.

Eur. See
Yon bloody squadron; look it is dispers'd;
They fly.

Nar. Perhaps to serve the tyrant's cause.

Eur. Far as my eyes can reach I see them still
Engag'd in fight.

Nar. Whose blood will there be shed?
Surely I heard the name of Merope,
And of Ægisthus.

Eur. Thanks to heav'n, the ways
Are open, I will hence, and know my fate.

[*He goes out.*]

Nar. I'll follow thee, but not with equal steps,
For I am old and feeble: O ye gods!
Restore my strength, give to this nerveless arm
Its former vigor; let me save my king,
Or yield up the poor remnant of my days,
And die in his defence.

SCENE VI.

NARBAS, ISMENIA. [A croud of people.]

Nar. Who's there? Ismenia?
Bloody and pale! O horrid spectacle!
Art thou indeed Ismenia?

Ism. O my voice,
My breath is lost; let me recover them,
And I will tell thee all.

Nar. My son—
The queen—do they yet live?

Ism. I'm scarce myself;
Half dead with fear; the croud have borne me hither.

Nar. How does Ægisthus?

Ism.

Ism. O he is indeed
The son of gods; a stroke so terrible,
So noble! never did th' unconquer'd courage
Of great Alcides with a deed so bold
Astonish mortals.

Nar. O my son, my king,
The work of my own hands, the gallant hero!

Ism. Crown'd with fresh flow'rs the victim was prepar'd,
And Hymen's torches round the altar blaz'd,
When Poliphontes, wrapp'd in gloomy silence,
Stretch'd forth his eager hand; the priest pronounc'd
The solemn words; amidst her weeping maids
Stood fix'd in grief the wretched Merope;
Slow she advanc'd, and trembling in these arms,
Instead of Hymen, call'd on death; the people
Were silent all; when from the holy threshold,
A more than mortal form, a youthful hero
Stepp'd forth, and sudden darted to the altar;
It was Ægisthus; there undaunted seiz'd
The axe that for the holy festival
Had been prepar'd; then with the light'ning's speed
He ran, and fell'd the tyrant; die, he cry'd,
Usurper, dye; now take your victim, gods.
Erox, the monster's vile accomplice, saw
His master welt'ring in his blood, uprais'd
His hand for vengeance; but Ægisthus smote
The slave, and laid him at the tyrant's feet:
Mean time, recover'd, Poliphontes rose
And fought; I saw Ægisthus wounded; saw
The fierce encounter: the guards ran to part them;
When Merope, such pow'r has mighty love,
Pierc'd thro' opposing multitudes, and cry'd,
Stop, ye inhuman murth'ers, 'tis my son,
'Tis my Ægisthus, turn your rage on me,
And plant your daggers in the breast of her
Who bore him, of his mother, and your queen:
Her shrieks alarm'd the croud, and a firm band
Of faithful friends secur'd her from the rage
Of the rude soldiers; then might you behold
The broken altars, and the sacred ruins:

On

On ev'ry side, confusion, war, and slaughter
 Triumphant reign'd; brothers on brothers rose,
 Children were butcher'd in their mother's arms,
 Friends murder'd friends, the dying and the dead
 Together lay, and o'er their bodies trampled
 The flying croud; with groans the temple rung.
 Amidst the uproar of contending legions
 I lost Ægisthus and the queen, and fled:
 In vain I ask'd each passing stranger whither
 They bent their way; their answers but increase
 My terrors; still they cry, he falls, he's dead,
 He conquers; all is darkness and confusion:
 I ran, I flew, and by the timely aid
 Of these kind friends have reach'd this place of safety:
 But still I know not whether yet the queen
 And great Ægisthus are preserv'd; my heart
 Is full of terrors.

Nar. Thou great arbiter
 Of all that's mortal, providence divine,
 Complete thy glorious work, protect the good,
 Support the innocent, reward the wretched,
 Preserve my son, and I shall die in peace!
 Ha! midst yon croud do I behold the queen?

S C E N E VII.

MEROPE, ISMENIA, NARBAS, people, soldiers.

*[At the further part of the stage is expos'd the Corpse
 of Poliphontes, cover'd with a bloody robe.]*

Mer. Priests, warriors, friends, my fellow-citizens,
 Attend, and hear me in the name of heav'n.
 Once more I swear, Ægisthus is your king,
 The scourge of guilt, th' avenger of his father,
 And yonder bleeding corpse, a hated monster,
 The foe of gods and men, who slew my husband,
 My dear Cresphontes, and his helpless children,
 Oppress'd Messene, and usurp'd my kingdom,

Yet

Yet dar'd to offer me his savage hand,
Still reeking with the blood of half my race.

[Meeting Ægisthus, who enters with the axe in his hand.]

But here behold Messene's royal heir;
My only hope, your queen's illustrious son,
Who conquer'd Poliphontes: see, my friends,
This good old man. *[Pointing to Narbas.]*
Who sav'd him from the tyrant,
And brought him here: the gods have done the rest.

Nar. I call those Gods to witness, 'tis your king;
He fought for them and they protected him.

Ægis. O hear a mother pleading for her son,
And know me for your king! I have reveng'd
A father, I have conquer'd but for you.

Mer. If still ye doubt, look on his glorious wounds:
Who, but the great descendant of Alcides,
Cou'd save Messene thus, and scourge a tyrant?
He will support his subjects, and revenge
An injur'd people: hark! the voice of heav'n
Confirms your choice, and speaks to you in thunder;
It cries aloud, Ægisthus is my son.

S C E N E VIII.

MEROPE, ÆGISTHUS, ISMENIA, NARBAS,
EURICLES, people.

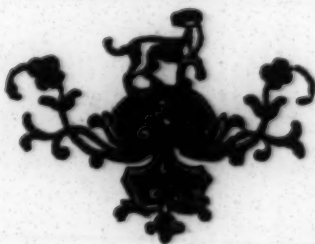
Eur. O madam, shew yourself to the pleas'd people,
The king's return has fix'd their wav'ring minds,
And eve'ry heart is ours: th' impatient croud
Shed tears of joy, and blefs your noble son:
For ever will they hold this glorious day
In sweet remembrance; ardently they long
To see their youthful sov'reign, to behold
His faithful Narbas, and adore their queen:
The name of Poliphontes is detested;
Thine and the king's the praise of ev'ry tongue.

O haste,

O haste, enjoy thy vict'ry and thy fame;
Enjoy a nobler prize, thy people's love.

Ægis. To heav'n ascribe the glory, not to me;
Thence comes our happiness, and thence our virtue:
Whilst Merope survives, I will not mount
Messene's throne, my joy shall be to place
A mother there; and thou, my dearest Narbas,
Shalt be my friend, my guide, my father still.

END of the FIFTH and LAST ACT.





P A N D O R A.

O P E R A.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PROMETHEUS, a Son of Heaven and Earth, a
Demi-God.

PANDORA.

JUPITER.

MERCURY.

NEMESIS.

NYMPHS.

TITANS.

COELESTIAL DEITIES.

INFERAL DEITIES.



PANDORA.

A N

O P E R A.

A C T I.

The scene represents a fine country, with mountains at a distance.

S C E N E I.

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS of NYMPHS, PAN-
DORA at the further end of the stage, lying down
in an alcove.

Prom. **I**N vain, Pandora, do I call on thee,
My lovely work; alas! thou hear'st me not
All stranger as thou art to thy own charms,
And to Prometheus' love: the heart I form'd
Is still insensible; thy eyes are void
Of motion still; the ruthless pow'r of Jove
Denies thee life, and drives me to despair.
Whilst nature breaths around thee, and the birds
In tender notes express their passion, thou
Art still inanimate; death holds thee still
Beneath his cruel empire.

S C E N E

S C E N E II.

PROMETHEUS, the TITANS, ENCELADUS,
TYPHON, &c.

ENCELADUS and TYPHON.

Enc. Child of Earth,

And Heav'n, thy cries have rais'd the forest; speak;
Who 'mong't the gods hath wrong'd Prometheus?

PROMOTHEUS. [*Pointing to Pandora.*] Jove
Is jealous of my work divine; he fears
That altars will be rais'd to my Pandora;
He cannot bear to see the earth adorn'd
With such a peerless object; he denies
To grant her life, and make my woes eternal.

Typh. That proud usurper Jove did ne'er create
Our nobler souls; life, and its sacred flame,
Come not from him.

Enc. [*Ponting to his brother Typhon.*] We are the
sons of Night

And Tartarus:

To thee, eternal night, we pray,
Thou wert long before the day;
Let then to Janarus Olympus yield.

Typh. Let the unrelenting Jove
Join the jealous gods above;
Life and all its blessings flow
From hell, and from the gods below.

PROMETHEUS and the TWO TITANS.

Come from the centre, gods of night profound,
And animate her beauty; let your pow'r
Assist our bold emprise!

Pro. Your voice is heard,
The day looks pale, and the astonish'd earth
Shakes from its deep foundations: Erebus
Appears before us.

The

[The scene changing represents chaos; all the gods of hell come upon the stage.]

CHORUS of INFERNAL DEITIES.

Light is hateful to our eyes,
Jove and heaven we despise;
The guilty race, as yet unborn, must go
With us to hell's profoundest depths below.

Nem. The waves of Lethe, and the flames of hell,
Shall ravage all: speak, whom must Janarus
In its dark womb embrace?

Pro. I love the earth,
And wou'd not hurt it: to that beauteous object
[Pointing to Pandora.]
Have I giv'n birth; but Jove denies it pow'r
To breathe, to think, to love, and to be happy.

The THREE PARCÆ.

All our glory, and our joy,
Is to hurt, and to destroy;
Heav'n alone can give it breath,
We can nought bestow but death.

Pro. Away then, ye destroyers, ye are not
The deities Prometheus shall adore;
Hence to your gloomy seats, ye hateful pow'rs,
And leave the world in peace.

Nem. Tremble thou, for thou shalt prove
Soon the fatal pow'r of love:
We will unchain the fiends of war,
And death's destructive gates unbar.

[The infernal deities disappear, and the country resumes its verdure: the nymphs of the woods range themselves on each side of the stage.]

Pro. *[To the Titans.]* Why wou'd ye call forth from
their dark abyss
The foes of nature, to obscure the light
Of these fair regions?

From hell Pandora never shall receive
That flame divine which only heav'n shou'd give.

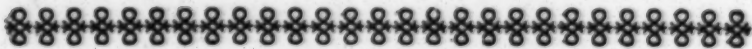
Enc. Since, good Prometheus, 'tis thy dear delight
To scatter blessings o'er this new abode,
Thou best deserv'st to be its master: haste
To yon blest regions, and snatch thence the flame
Cœlestial,

Cœlestial, form a soul, and be thyself
The great Creator.

Pro. Love's in heav'n; he reigns
O'er all the gods: I'll throw his darts around,
And light up his fierce fires: he is my god,
And will assist Prometheus.

CHORUS of NYMPHS.

Fly to the immortal realms above,
And penetrate the throne of Jove;
The world to thee shall altars raise,
And millions celebrate thy praise.



A C T II.

The scene represents the same country; Pandora inanimate reclin'd in the alcove; a flaming chariot descends from heaven.

PROMETHEUS, PANDORA, NYMPHS,
TITANS, &c.

A D R Y A D.

YE woodland nymphs, rise from your fair abode,
and sing the praises of the demi-god;
Who returns from above
In the chariot of love

CHORUS of NYMPHS.

Ye verdant lawns, and op'ning flow'rs,
Ye springs which lavish nature's pow'rs;
Ye hills that bear th' impending sky,

Put on your fairest forms to meet his eye.

Pro. [*Descending from the chariot, with a torch in his hand.*]

Ravish'd from heav'n I bring the happier earth
Love's sacred flame, more brilliant than the light

Of

Of glitt'ring day, and to Jove's boasted thunder
Superior.

CHORUS of NYMPHS.

Go, thou enliv'ning animating soul,
Thro' nature's ev'ry work, pervade the whole
To earth, to water, and to air impart,
Thy vivid pow'r, and breathe o'er ev'ry heart.

Pro. [*Coming near to Pandora.*] And may this pre-
cious flame inspire thy frame

With life and motion! earth, assist my purpose!
Rise, beauteous object, love commands thee; haste,
Obey his voice; arise, and blest Prometheus!

[*Pandora rises, and comes forward.*]

Cho. She breathes, she lives; O love, how great thy
pow'r!

Pan. Whence, and what am I? to what gracious
pow'rs

Owe I my life and being?

Hark! my ears [*A symphony is heard at a distance.*]

Are ravish'd with enchanting sounds; my eyes

With beauteous objects fill'd on ev'ry side:

What wonders hath my kind creator spread

Around me! O where is he? I have thought

And reason to enlighten me: O earth,

'Thou'rt not my mother; some benignant god

Produc'd me: yes, I feel him in my heart.

[*She sits down by the side of a fountain.*]

What do I see! myself, in this fair fountain,

That doth reflect the face of heav'n *? the more

I see this image, sure the more I ought

To thank the gods who made me.

NYMPHS and TITANS. [*Dancing round her.*]

Fair Pandora,

Daughter of heaven, let thy charms inspire

An equal flame, and fan the mutual fire.

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P

Pan.

* The original is,

"Le chrystal de l'onde est le miroir des cieux."

"The chrystal of this water is the looking-glass of heaven."

Which is, perhaps, describing Pandora as better acquainted with
looking-glasses, than one wou'd expect from a lady so lately born.

Pan. What lovely object that way draws my eyes?

[*To Prometheus.*

Of all I see in these delightful mansions,
Nought pleases like thyself; 'twas thou alone
Who gav'st me life, and I will live for thee.

Pro. Before those lovely eyes cou'd see

Their author, they enchanted me;

Before that tongue cou'd speak, Prometheus lov'd thee:

Pan. Thou lov'st me then, dear author of my life,
And my heart owns its master; for to thee
It flies with transport: have I said too much,
Or not enough?

Pro. O thou can'st never say
Too much; thou speak'st the language of pure love
And nature: thus may lovers always speak!

D U E T.

God of my heart, eternal pow'r,

Great love, enliven ev'ry hour;

Thy reign begins, and may thy transports prove

The reign of pleasure is the reign of love!

Pro. But hark! the thunder rolls; thick clouds of
darkness,

As envious of the earth's new happiness,

Disturb our joys: what horrors throng around me!

Hark! the earth shakes, and angry light'nings pierce

The vault of heav'n: what pow'r thus moves the world
From its foundations?

[*A car descends, on which are seated Mercury, Discord,
Nemesis, &c.*

Mer. Some rash hand hath stol'n
The sacred fire from heav'n to expiate
The dire offence, Pandora, thou must go
Before the high tribunal of the gods.

Pro. O cruel tyrant!

Pan. Dread commands!

Mer. Obey:

Thou must to heav'n.

Pan. I was in heav'n already,
When I beheld the object of my love.

Pro. Have pity, cruel gods!

Prom. and *Pan.* Barbarians, stay.

Mer.

Mer. Haste, offenders, haste away,
 Jove commands, you must obey :
 Bear her, ye winds, to heav'n's eternal mansions.
[The car mounts, and disappears.]

The cruel tyrants, jealous of my bliss,
 Have torn her from me ; she was the lovely work
 Of my own hands : I have done more than Jove
 Cou'd ever do : Pandora's charming eyes,
 Soon as they open'd, told me that she lov'd :
 Thou jealous god ! but thou shalt feel my wrath,
 And I will brave thy pow'r : for know, usurper,

Less dreadful far will all thy thunders prove,
 Than bold Prometheus fir'd by hopeless love.



A C T III.

The scene represents the palace of Jupiter.

JUPITER, MERCURY.

Jup. **O** Mercury, I've seen this lovely object,
 Earth's fair production ; heav'n is in her eye,
 The graces dwell around her, and my heart
 Is sacrific'd a victim to her charms.

Mer. And she shall answer to thy love.

Jup. O no :

Terror is mine, and pow'r ; I reign supreme
 O'er earth, and hell, and heav'n ; but love alone
 Can govern hearts : malicious, cruel fate,
 When it divided this fair universe,
 Bestow'd the better part on mighty love.

Mer. What fear'st thou ? fair Pandora scarce hath seen
 The light of day ; and think'st thou that she loves ?

Jup. Love is a passion learn'd with ease ; and what
 Cannot Pandora do ? she is a woman,
 And handsome : but I will retire a moment,
 Enchant her eyes, and captivate her heart :

Ye heav'ns! in vain, alas! ye shine, for nought
Have you so fair, so beauteous as Pandora. [*He retires.*]

Pan. Scarce had these eyes beheld the light of day,
Scarce have they look'd on him I lov'd, when lo!
'Tis all snatch'd from me; death, they say, will come
And take me soon: O I have felt him sure
Already: is not death the sudden loss
Of those we love? O give me back, ye gods,
To earth, to that delightful grove where first
I saw my kind creator, when at once
I breath'd and lov'd: O envy'd happiness!

[*The gods, with their several attributes, come upon the stage.*]

CHORUS of GODS.

Let heav'n rejoice
At the glad voice
Of heav'n's eternal king.

Nep. Let the sea's bosom—

Plu. And the depths of hell—

CHORUS of GODS.

To distant worlds his endless praises tell.

Let heav'n rejoice, &c.

Pan. How all conspires to threaten and alarm me!
O how I hate and fear this dazzling splendor!

Another's merit how can I approve,
Or bear the praise of ought but him I love?

The THREE GRACES.

Love's fair daughter, here remain,
'Thou in right of him shalt reign:
Heav'n thy chosen seat shall be,
Earth in vain shall wish for thee.

Pan. All affrights me,
Nought delights me,

Alas! a desert had more charms for me.

Hence, ye idle visions; cease

Discordant sounds, [*A Symphony is heard.*]

And give me peace.

[*Jupiter comes forth out of a cloud.*]

Jup. Thou art the best and fairest charm of nature,
Well worthy of eternity: from earth

Sprang

Sprang thy weak body ; but thy purer soul
Partakes of heav'n's unalterable fire,
And thou wert born for gods alone : with Jove
Taste then the sweets of immortality.

Pan. I scorn thy gift, and rather wou'd be nothing,
From whence I sprang ; thy immortality,
Without the lovely object I adore,
Is but eternal punishment.

Jup. Fair creature,
Thou know'st not I am master of the thunder :
Can'st thou in heav'n look back to earth ?

Pan. That earth
Is my abode ; there first I learn'd to love.

Jup. 'Twas but the shadow of it, in a world
Unworthy of that noble flame, which here
Alone can burn unquenchable.

Pan. Great Jove,
Content with glory and with splendor, leave :
To earthly lovers happiness and joy :
Thou art a god ; O hear my humble pray'r !
A gracious god shou'd make his creatures happy.

Jup. Thou shalt be happy, and in thee I hope
For bliss supreme : ye pow'rful pleasures, you,
Who dwell around me, now exert your charms,
Deceive her lovely eyes, and win her heart.

[The pleasures dance around her and sing.]

CHORUS of PLEASURES.

Thou with us shalt reign and love,
Thou alone art worthy Jove.

A SINGLE VOICE.

Nought has earth but shadows vain,
Of pleasures follow'd close by pain ;
Soon her winged transports fly,
Soon her roses fade and die.

CHORUS.

Thou with us shalt reign and love,
Thou alone art worthy Jove.

SINGLE VOICE.

Here the brisk and sportive Hours
Shall cull thee ever-blooming flow'rs ;

Time has no wings, he cannot fly,
And love is join'd to immortality.

Chor. Thou with us shalt reign and love,
Thou alone art worthy Jove.

Pan. Ye tender pleasures, ye increase my flame,
And ye increase my pain : if happiness
Is yours to give, O bear it to my love.

Jup. Is this the sad effect of all my care,
To make a rival happy ? [Enter Mercury.]

Mer. Assume thy light'nings, Jove, and blast thy foe ;
Prometheus is in arms, the Titans rage,
And threaten heav'n ; mountain on mountain piled,
They scale the skies ; already they approach.

Jup. Jove has the pow'r to punish : let 'em come.

Pan. And wilt thou punish ? thou, who art the cause
Of all his mis'ries ; thou'rt a jealous tyrant :
Go on, and love me ; I shall hate thee more ;
Be that thy punishment.

Jup. I must away :
Rive 'em, ye thunder-bolts.

Pan. Have mercy, Jove !

Jup. Conduct Pandora to a place of safety : [To Merc.]
The happy world was wrapp'd in peace profound,
A beauty comes, and nought is seen but ruin.

[He goes out.]

Pan. [Alone.] O fatal charms ! wou'd I had ne'er
Beauty and love, and ev'ry gift divine, [been born !]
But make me wretched : if, all-pow'rful love,
Thou did'st create me, now relieve my sorrows ;
Dry up my tears, bid war and slaughter cease,
And give to heav'n and earth eternal peace.

END of the THIRD ACT.

A C T

A C T IV.

The scene represents the Titans arm'd, mountains at a distance, with giants throwing them on each other.

Enc. **F**EAR not, Prometheus, nature feels thy wrongs,
And joins with us in just revenge : behold
These pointed rocks, and shaggy mountains ; soon
The jealous tyrants all shall sink beneath them.

Pro. Now, earth, defend thyself, and combat heav'n :
Trumpets and drums, now shall ye first be heard :
March, Titans, follow me : the seat of gods
Is your reward ; be fair Pandora mine.

[They march to the sound of trumpets.]

CHORUS of TITANS.

Arm, ye valiant Titans, arm,
Spread round the dread alarm :

Let proud immortals tremble on their thrones.

Pro. Their thunder answers to our trumpet's voice.

*[Thunder is heard ; a car descends, bearing the gods
towards the mountains : Pandora is seated near Jupiter ;
Prometheus speaks.]*

Jove gives the dreadful signal ; haste, begin
The battle.

[The giants rise towards heaven.]

CHORUS of NYMPHS.

Earth, and hell, and heav'n confounded,
All with terrors are surrounded ;
Cease, ye gods, and Titans, cease
Your cruel wars, and give us peace.

Tit. Yield, cruel tyrants.

Gods. Rebels fly.

Tit. Yield, heav'n, to earth.

Gods. Die, rebels, die.

Pan. O heav'n ! O earth ! ye Titans, and ye gods,
O cease your rage, all perish for Pandora :
O I have made the world unhappy.

Tit. Draw

Your arrows now.

Gods.

Gods. Strike, thunders.

Tit. Hurl down heav'n.

Gods. Destroy the earth.

Both. Yield, cruel tyrants—rebels fly——

Yield, earth, to heav'n—die, rebels, die.

[*A dead silence for a time; a bright cloud descends;
Destiny appears, seated in the middle of it.*]

Def. Cease, hostile pow'rs, attend to me,
And hear the will of Destiny. [*Silence ensues.*]

Pro. Unalterable being, pow'r supreme,
Speak thy irrevocable doom; Attend,
Ye tyrants, and obey.

Chor. Speak, the gods must yield to thee;
Speak, immortal Destiny.

Def. [*In the middle of the gods, who throng round him.*]
Hear me, ye gods; another world this day
Brings forth: mean time let ev'ry gift adorn
Pandora; and you, Titans, who 'gainst heav'n
Have rais'd rebellious war, receive your doom,
Beneath these mountains sunk for ever groan.

[*The rocks fall upon them; the chariot of the gods descends to earth; Pandora is restor'd to Prometheus.*]

Jup. O fate, my empire yields to thee,
Jove submits to destiny:
Thou art obey'd; but from this hour let earth
And heav'n be disunited: Nemesis,
Come forth.

[*Nemesis advances from the bottom of the stage, and
Jupiter proceeds.*]

Nemesis, thy aid impart,
Pierce the cruel beauty's heart;
My vengeance let Pandora know,
In the gifts that I bestow:
Let heav'n and earth henceforth be disunited.

A C T V.

The scene represents a grove, with the ruins of rocks
scattered about it.

PROMETHEUS, PANDORA.

PANDORA. [*Holding a box in her hand.*]

AND wilt thou leave me then? art thou subdued,
Or art thou conqueror? *Pro.*

Pro. Victory is mine :
If yet thou lov'st me, love and destiny
Speak for Prometheus.

Pan. Wilt thou leave me then ?

Pro. The Titans are subdued : lament their fate :
I must assist them : let us teach mankind
To succour the unhappy.

Pan. Stay a moment :
Behold thy vict'ry : let us open this,
It was the gift of Jove.

Pro. What wou'dst thou do ?
A rival's gift is dang'rous ; 'tis some snare
The gods have laid.

Pan. Thou can'st not think it.

Pro. Hear
What I request of thee, and stay at least
Till I return.

Pan. Thou bidd'st, and I obey :
I swear by love still to believe Prometheus.

Pro. Wilt thou then promise ?

Pan. By thy self I swear :
All are obedient where they love.

Pro. Enough :
I'm satisfy'd : and now, ye woodland nymphs,
Begin your songs ; sing earth restor'd to bliss ;
Let all be gay, for all was made for her.

First Nymph. Come, fair Pandora, come and prove
An age of gold, of innocence, and love ;
And, like thy parent nature, be immortal.

Second Nymph. No longer now shall earth affrighted
mourn,

By cruel war her tender bosom torn :
Pleasures now on pleasures flow,
Happiness succeeds to woe :
The flow'rs their fragrant odours yield ;
Who wou'd wither the fair field ?

The blest creation teems with mirth and joy,
And nature's work what tyrant wou'd destroy ?

The CHORUS repeats.

Come, fair Pandora, come and prove
An age of gold, &c.

First

First Nymph. See! to Pandora Mercury appears,
And ratifies great nature's kind decree.

[*The nymphs retire: Pandora advances with Nemesis, under the figure of Mercury.*

Nem. Already I have told thee, base Prometheus
Is jealous of thee, and exerts his pow'r
Like a harsh tyrant.

Pan. O he is my lord,
My king, my god, my lover, and my husband.

Nem. Why then forbid thee to behold the gift
Of gen'rous heav'n?

Pan. His fearful love's alarm'd,
And I wou'd wish to have no will but his.

Nem. He asks too much, Pandora, nor hath done
What thou deserv'st: he might have giv'n thee beauties
Which now thou hast not.

Pan. He hath form'd my heart
Tender and kind; he charms and he adores me;
What cou'd he more?

Nem. Thy charms will perish.

Pan. Ha!
Thou mak'st me tremble.

Nem. This mysterious box
Will make thy charms immortal; thou wilt be
For ever beauteous, and for ever happy:
Thy husband shall be subject to thy pow'r,
And thou shall reign unrivall'd in his love.

Pan. He is my only lord, and I wou'd wish
To be immortal, but for my Prometheus.

Nem. Fain wou'd I open thy fair eyes, and bless thee
With ev'ry good; wou'd make thee please for ever.

Pan. But dost thou not abuse my innocence?
And can'st thou be so cruel?

Nem. Who wou'd hurt
Such beauty?

Pan. I shou'd die with grief, if e'er
I disoblig'd the sov'reign of my heart.

Nem. O in the name of nature, in the name
Of thy dear husband, listen to my voice!

Pan.

Pan. That name has conquer'd, and I will believe thee.

[She opens the box ; darkness is spread over the stage, and a voice heard from below.]

Ha! what thick cloud thus o'er my senses spreads
Its fatal darkness? thou deceitful god!

O I am guilty, and I suffer for it.

Nem. I must away: Jove is reveng'd, and now
I will return to hell.

[Nemesis vanishes: Pandora faints away on the grass.]

Pro. *[Advancing from the farther end of the stage.]*

O fatal absence! dreadful change! what star
Of evil influence thus deforms the face
Of nature? where's my dear Pandora? why
Answers she not to my complaining voice?
O my Pandora! but behold, from hell
Let loose, the monsters rise, and rush upon us.

[Furies and Demons running on the stage.]

The time is come when we shall reign:
Fear and grief, remorse and pain,
From this great decisive hour,
O'er the world shall spread their pow'r;
Death shall come, a bitter draught,
By the Furies hither brought.

Pro. That cruel guest shall pow'rs infernal bring?
And must the earth lose her eternal spring?
To time, and dire disease, and horrid vice,
Shall mortals fall a helpless sacrifice?

The nymphs lament our fate: Pandora, hear,
And answer to my griefs! she comes, but seems
Insensible.

Pan. I am not worthy of thee;
I have destroy'd mankind, deceiv'd my husband,
And am alone the guilty cause of all:
Strike; I deserve it.

Pro. Can I punish thee?

Pan. Strike, and deprive me of that wretched life
Thou did'st bestow.

CHORUS of NYMPHS.

Tend'rest lover, dry her tears,
She is full of lover's fears;

She

She is woman, therefore frail,
Let her beauty then prevail.

Pro. Hast thou then, spite of all thy solemn vows,
Open'd the fatal box?

Pan. Some cruel god
Betray'd me: fatal curiosity!

The work was thine: O ev'ry evil sprung
From that accursed gift: undone Pandora!

LOVE. [*Descending from heav'n.*
Love still remains, and ev'ry good is thine:

[*Scene changes, and represents the palace of love.*
For thee will I resist the pow'r of fate; [*Love proceeds.*
I gave to mortals being, and they ne'er
Shall be unhappy whilst they worship me.

Pan. Soul of my soul, thou comforter divine,
O punish Jove; inspire his vengeful heart
With double passion for the blest Pandora!

PROMETHEUS and PANDORA.

Heav'n shall pierce our hearts in vain
With ev'ry grief, and ev'ry pain;
With thee no pains torment, no pleasures cloy;
With thee to suffer is but to enjoy.

Love. Lovely hope, on mortals wait;
Come, and gild their wretched state;
All thy flatt'ring joys impart,
Haste, and live in ev'ry heart;
Howe'er deceitful thou may'st be
Thou can'st grant felicity,

And make them happy in futurity.

Pan. Fate wou'd make us wretched here,
But hope shall dry up ev'ry tear;
In sorrow he shall give us rest,
And make us ev'n in anguish blest:
Love shall preserve us from the paths of vice,
And strew his flow'rs around the precipice.

END of the TWENTY-SECOND VOLUME.



